

[UNTITLED]

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013

(p. iv)

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide.

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by

Oxford University Press

198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

© Oxford University Press 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior
permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law,
by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organiza-
tion.

Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to
the

Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

The Oxford handbook of the state in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean / edited by

Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-518831-8

1. State, The—History—To 1500. 2. Political science—History—To 1500.

3. Middle East—Politics and government. 4. Mediterranean Region—Politics and government. 5. Comparative government.

I. Bang, Peter F. (Peter Fibiger), 1973- II. Scheidel, Walter, 1966-

JC51.O94 2013

320.935—dc23

2012009018

ISBN 978-0-19-518831-8

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Maps

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013

(p. vii) Maps

- 2.1 Pharaonic Egypt 66
- 2.2 Ptolemaic Egypt 67
- 3.1 Cities of the Ancient Near East, circa 3500–100 BCE 98
- 4.1 Empires of Western Asia, circa 2350–1700 BCE 132
- 4.2 Empires of the Near East, circa 1500–1100 BCE 136
- 4.3 Empires of the Near East, circa 900–550 BCE 139
- 5.1 The World of the Hittites 162
- 6.1 Palestine under Herod and His Heirs 182
- 7.1 The Achaemenid Empire 200
- 7.2 The Parthian and Sasanian Empires 206
- 8.1 Bronze Age Greece 238
- 9.1 The Greek Polis of the Aegean World 261
- 9.2 Greek Colonization 262
- 10.1 The Athenian Empire 281
- 10.2 Sicily and Southern Italy 282
- 11.1 *Koina* in Mainland Greece in the Fourth Century BCE 305
- 12.1 The Hellenistic World around 250 BCE 331
- 13.1 The Carthaginian Empire from the First to the Second Punic War 362
- 14.1 The Roman Empire circa 60 BCE 385
- 15.1 The Roman Empire around 70 CE 416
- 15.2 The Roman Empire in the Early Fourth Century CE 451
- 16.1 The Byzantine Empire and Its Neighbors circa 840 CE 477
- 17.1 The Early Medieval Successor States around 525 CE 500
- 18.1 The Umayyad Empire circa 740 CE 520

(p. viii)

Figures and Tables

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediter-
ranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013

 Figures and Tables

Table 3.1. Standard Periodization of Early Mesopotamia 99

Fig. 3.1. A representation of the city-state economy 113

Fig. 4.1. A sketch drawing that shows the oscillation in Mesopotamian history be-
tween political fragmentation and imperial centralization from the third to the first
millennium BCE 123

Table 8.1. Outline Chronology of Second-Millennium BCE Crete and Mainland
Greece, Showing Cultural and Ceramic Phases and Approximate Absolute Dates 240

Fig. 12.1. The tributary and economic flows of Hellenistic empires 347

Table 15.1. Roman and Early Modern Military Mobilization 419–420

Table 15.2. Army Expenditure and the Economy of the Roman Empire 445

Table 15.3. Army Totals and Battle Strengths, Late Roman and Early Modern 455



Contributors

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013

(p. xi) Contributors

Walter Ameling is Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cologne. Besides Carthage, he is mainly interested in the Eastern Roman Empire, its religions, and its inscriptions.

Peter Fibiger Bang is associate professor at the Saxo Institute of the University of Copenhagen and holds a doctorate from the University of Cambridge. He is a Roman comparative historian with a keen interest in historical sociology and world history.

Gojko Barjamovic is Assistant Professor of Assyriology at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen. His main areas of research are early Assyrian history, society, and economy.

John Bennet is Professor of Aegean Archaeology at the University of Sheffield. His research interests lie in the archaeology of complex societies, particularly the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures of the Bronze Age Aegean; the archaeology and history of Crete; and early writing and administrative systems, especially Linear B.

Contributors

Trevor Bryce is Professor Emeritus at the University of Queensland. He has published extensively on the Ancient Near East.

Steven J. Garfinkle is a professor of ancient history at Western Washington University. His current research focuses on the society and economy of early Mesopotamia.

John F. Haldon is Professor of History and Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. His research focuses on the history of the early and middle Byzantine empire; on state systems and structures across the European and Islamic worlds from late ancient to early modern times; and on the production, distribution, and consumption of resources in the late ancient and medieval world, especially in the context of warfare.

Mogens Herman Hansen at the University of Copenhagen is a leading authority on Athenian democracy and the Greek polis.

John Ma was trained in ancient history in Geneva, Oxford, Paris, Hamburg, and Princeton; he now teaches ancient history at Oxford University. His main interests are Greek epigraphy and the social history of power in the ancient world, through the study of the two complementary forms of tributary empire and local city-state. (p. xii)

Emily Mackil is Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. A historian of the ancient Greek world, she has a special interest in issues of state formation and political economy.

Joseph G. Manning took his doctorate in Egyptology at the University of Chicago. He taught at the University of Chicago, Princeton, and Stanford before taking up his current position as the William K. and Marilyn M. Simpson Professor of Classics and Ancient History at Yale.

Contributors

Ian Morris is Willard Professor of Classics and Professor of History at Stanford University. He works on long-term global history.

Henrik Mouritsen is Professor of Roman history at King's College London. He works on Roman social and political history.

Chase F. Robinson is Professor of History at the CUNY Graduate Center. He works on the early history of Islam and the Arab expansion.

Walter Scheidel is Dickason Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. His research focuses on premodern social and economic history, demography, state formation, and comparative and transdisciplinary perspectives.

Seth Schwartz is Professor in the History and Classics Departments at Columbia University. He writes on the social, cultural, and political history of the Jews in antiquity.

Josef Wiesehöfer is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Kiel. His main interests are the history of the ancient Near East and its relations with the Mediterranean world, social history, the history of early modern travelogues, and the history of scholarship.

Ian Wood is Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Leeds. His chief research interests are the post-Roman period, the Christianization of Western and Central Europe, Anglo-Saxon England in the Age of Bede, and eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century interpretations of the Fall of Rome.

Oxford Handbooks Online

Prologue

Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0001

Abstract and Keywords

This introductory chapter discusses the theme of this book, which is about the history of state formation in ancient North Africa and western Eurasia. The book aims to bridge the disciplinary gap between the study of the ancient Near East and the study of the ancient Mediterranean, exploring various factors that influenced state formation, including ideologies, political power, cooperation, exploitation, and military power. The areas covered in this study include Egypt, the Mesopotamian Empires, and the Anatolian States.

Keywords: state formation, ancient North Africa, ancient western Eurasia, ancient Near East, ancient Mediterranean, ideologies, political power, exploitation, military power, cooperation

A handbook of the “ancient state” is the result of multiple demarcations, which require explanation. One demarcation is in time. Our case studies begin with the earliest documented states in the Fertile Crescent. These beginnings are inevitably obscure, and we have to allow for the possibility that the very first states may not be known as such: What were conditions in the Nile Valley prior to the First Dynasty, and were the Sumerian city-states of the third millennium BCE preceded by forerunners in the Levant, or by a territorial state centered on Uruk, or by polities in nearby Khuzestan? In the absence of written records, these questions are difficult to answer with certainty. Our endpoint is the period of transition of the fifth through eighth centuries CE, marked by the fading of Roman and Iranian empire and the formation of Arabic and Germanic successor states. This is merely a conventional boundary, chosen for pragmatic reasons: a more “natural” one, between premodern states and the modern nation-states and their colonial empires, would have led to a very different project, and certainly to more than one volume.

Prologue

A second set of limits is imposed in space. Our project deals with the ancient states of western Eurasia and northern Africa. This ecumene was firmly bounded by the ocean to the west and quite clearly, for our present purposes, by stateless peripheries to the north and south. By contrast, Eurasian geography provides no similarly convenient boundary to the east. We focus on the region that gradually came to be encompassed by a single political-military network, a system of states that interacted regularly in a variety of ways far beyond the more ephemeral exchange of prestige goods and information that was feasible across much longer distances. Political and military contacts between the states of the Near East and the Mediterranean and regions farther east were not completely absent but generally remained rare: Achaemenid expansion into the Indus Valley and Alexander's (p. 4) campaign and its consequences are the main exceptions. Our geographical boundaries are at their murkiest in Central Asia, and our selection is in the first instance governed by a desire to avoid a chain reaction. If we had included the Kushana, coverage would have had to be extended into the Indian subcontinent; and in that case, only a few other states would have been rather awkwardly excluded from an otherwise fairly pan-Afroeurasian survey. Faced with a stark choice between confining ourselves to the state system of the Fertile Crescent, with its growing Iranian and Mediterranean extensions, and covering all of Afroeurasia, constraints of space favor the more limited version. A companion volume on much of Asia is therefore a desideratum.

Our third kind of demarcation concerns the level of resolution. This volume is not intended as an encyclopedic compendium of all states that are known to have existed in the area and period under review. The quality of the historical record is the key criterion: While we are aware of Elam and Urartu, of Phrygia and Lydia, of Armenia and the Bosporan Kingdom, or of Meroe and Himyar, lines must be drawn. We also refrain from including entities whose "state-ness" is uncertain, such as the Celtic polities of pre-Roman Gaul.

These demarcations leave us with eighteen historical chapters, many of them devoted to several states or to a particular type of state, some to a single case, and a few covering different phases of the same system (Rome). These surveys are not only meant to provide important information but also to support cross-cultural and comparative perspectives. In order to ensure the consistency required for this purpose, emphasis is put on a series of key issues: the political system; the organization of military power; mechanisms of cooperation, coercion, and resource extraction; means of arbitration and rule enforcement; economic activities; belief systems; systems of communication and representation; state identity; and the end or transformations of these states. At the same time, the uneven quality of the evidence and diverse scholarly preferences necessitate a measure of flexibility that serves to enrich the resulting accounts.

Our main objectives are to bridge the disciplinary gap between the study of the ancient Near East and the study of the ancient Mediterranean, and to provide a resource that is accessible, useful, and of interest not only to students and specialists of ancient history but also to historians of other periods as well as anthropologists, historical sociologists, and political scientists. To further these goals, we include an introductory chapter that

Prologue

seeks to convey a sense of the wide range of approaches to the study of the early state and not least to relate these to the discourse on state formation in general that has developed in the last decades. This latter literature has to a very large extent been dominated by what we might term the European experience, from the Middle Ages onward. With this volume, we hope to widen the analytical horizon and call attention to the preceding “ancient” experience of several millennia of state formation and its potential for refining and nuancing the existing body of theory in the field.

Peter Fibiger Bang

Peter Fibiger Bang is Associate Professor of History at the University of Copenhagen. He works on the comparative economic history and political economy of early empires.

Walter Scheidel

Walter Scheidel, Dickason Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Studying the State

Walter Scheidel

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0002

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses the concept and various definitions of state. These include Max Weber's definition of the state as a specific type of political organization and his emphasis on regulation and coercion anchored in a distinct and differentiated organization, and John Haldon's opinion that a state is a set of institutions and personnel exerting authority over a territorially distinct area. The chapter argues that while existing theories variously privilege resource stress, state structure, and state size, actual outcomes are often seen as mediated by exogenous factors such as competitors and environmental factors.

Keywords: state, Max Weber, political organization, regulation, coercion, John Haldon, authority, resource stress, state structure, state size

Definitions

What is a “state”? Definitions proliferate. Modern scholarship often shows the influence of Max Weber's definition of the state as a specific type of political organization:

“A ‘ruling organization’ shall be called a ‘*political* organization’ if and insofar as its existence and the effectiveness of its order within a specifiable geographical *area* are continuously safeguarded by the application and the threat of physical coercion on the part of the administrative staff. A continuously operating compulsory political organization shall be called a ‘state’ if and insofar as its

Studying the State

administrative staff successfully claims the *monopoly of legitimate* physical coercion in the implementation of its order.”¹

Weber’s emphasis on regulation and coercion, anchored in a distinct and differentiated organization as defining characteristics of the state, is echoed in more recent definitions. For instance, Stephen Sanderson regards the state as “a form of sociopolitical organization that has achieved a monopoly over the means of violence within a specified territory,” while conceding that the notion of “monopoly” has to be treated with caution. Charles Tilly specifies priority rather than monopoly in defining states as “coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories.”² It is worth noting, however, that Weber speaks very specifically of a claim to legitimate force *in the enforcement of state rules*, and does not envision an effective monopoly on physical coercion per se.³ In this regard, his approach fits the situation of early states with their diffused coercive capabilities better than is sometimes realized.

(p. 6) Michael Mann combines the element of coercion with those of rule making and territorial control: “The state is a differentiated set of institutions and personnel embodying centrality, in the sense that political relations radiate outward to cover a territorially demarcated area, over which it claims a monopoly of binding and permanent rule-making, backed up by physical violence.”⁴

John Haldon proffers a shorter version of the same concept, with the state “represent[ing] a set of institutions and personnel, concentrated spatially at a single point, and exerting authority over a territorially distinct area.” For Mogens Hansen, the state “is a centralised legitimate government in possession of the sole right to enforce a given legal order within a territory over a population” and “characterised by specialised and hierarchically organised decision-making institutions and administrative organs which have monopolised the legitimate use of physical force.” Jack Goldstone and Haldon qualify the criterion of monopoly on coercive power by defining the state as “a territorially demarcated region controlled by centralizing governing or ruling establishments, which may or may not have a monopoly over the use of coercion but which usually have the coercive power to assert their authority over the territories they claim, at least on the occasional ‘punitive’ basis if needed.” A somewhat different configuration of factors is favored by Charles Tilly in an earlier definition of the state as “an organization which controls the population occupying a defined territory is a state *in so far as* (1) it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; (2) it is autonomous; (3) it is centralized; and (4) its divisions are formally coordinated with one another.” Ian Morris is more minimalist, settling for “complex, permanently hierarchical social and political organization, with formal offices of government,” whereas Hansen envisions “a *centralised government* in possession of the necessary *means of coercion* by which the *legal order* can be enforced in a *territory* over a *population*” [emphases in original].⁵

Studying the State

Others include the criteria of aggregation or subordination within the state. Thus, for Robert Carneiro, a “state is an autonomous political unit, encompassing many communities within its territory and having a centralized government with the power to draft men for war or work, levy and collect taxes, and decree and enforce laws.” (However, microstates, such as city-states, need not be comprised of multiple community-level units.) Ronald Cohen defines it as “a specifiable variety of political systems distinguishable by its centralized bureaucracy and dominant control of force by the central authority over subordinate segments of the society.”⁶ The aspect of stratification and domination is more clearly enunciated by Henri Claessen and Peter Skalník in a definition that is more narrowly tailored to describe what they call the “early state,” the subject of a series of comparative investigations:

“The early state is a centralized socio-political organization for the regulation of social relations in a complex, stratified society divided into at least two basic strata, or emergent social classes—viz. the rulers and the ruled—, whose relations are characterized by political dominance of the former and tributary obligations of the latter, legitimized by a common ideology of which reciprocity is the basic principle.”⁷

(p. 7) All these definitions coalesce around a number of key features: centralized institutions that impose rules, and back them up by force, over a territorially circumscribed population; a distinction between the rulers and the ruled; and an element of autonomy, stability, and differentiation. These distinguish the state from less stable forms of organization, such as the exercise of chiefly power.⁸

Alternative perspectives stress features that are not critical to these mainstream definitions, such as Morton Fried’s state as “the complex of institutions by means of which the power of the society is organized on a basis superior to kinship.” Elizabeth Brumfield represents the strong anthropological focus on managerial functions beyond the political sphere in her definition of states as “powerful, complex, institutionalized hierarchies of public decision making and control. They are created to implement the relations of production in stratified societies and to mediate conflict between diverse economic interest groups. Maintaining economic organization is a primary function of all state hierarchies, and this function is the key to the political power for state personnel.”

A more extreme outlier is the cybernetic approach inherent in Henry Wright’s definition of the state as “a society with specialized decision-making organizations that are receiving messages from many different sources, recoding these messages, supplementing them with previously stored data, making the actual decision, storing both the message and the decision, and conveying decisions back to other organizations.”⁹ What these definitions have in common is that although they describe significant features, they do not specify characteristics that are unique to the state as clearly as the earlier examples.

Studying the State

If we seek a globally applicable definition of the state, care must be taken to define the state in terms that do not require the presence of features that are typical of recent Western history but not always present elsewhere. Samuel Finer's extended definition of the state illustrates this problem when he claims that premodern states approximate the following three conditions:

"1. They are territorially defined populations recognizing a common paramount organ of government. 2. This organ is served by specialized personnel; a civil service, to carry out decisions and a military service to back these by force where necessary and to protect the association from similarly constituted associations. 3. The state, so characterized is recognized by other similarly constituted states as independent in its action on its territorially defined—and hence confined—population, that is, on its subjects. This recognition constitutes what we would today call its international 'sovereignty.'"¹⁰

The third requirement is problematic because it implies that the earliest, "pristine" states were not states simply because they lacked equivalent neighbors, which is hard to justify if we focus on organizational features in order to define "stateness." This is a more widespread problem in scholarship that takes its cue from the modern Western experience but considers it as globally normative. Thus, Gianfranco Poggi questions the statehood of early states because they were either too loosely organized to qualify as such or otherwise have to be classified as "empires" that did not recognize other states. His notion that both state autonomy and territory imply (p. 8) embeddedness in a state system is a non sequitur.¹¹ A more extreme version of this is Martin van Creveld's claim that no "states" existed prior to about 1300 because all earlier polities have to be classified as tribes, chiefdoms, city-states, or empires, none of which meet his narrow definition of the state as

"a corporation in the sense that it possesses a legal *persona* of its own," a corporation which differs from other corporations in that "first,...it authorizes them all but is itself authorized (recognized) solely by others of its kind; secondly, that certain functions (known collectively as the attributes of sovereignty) are reserved for it alone; and, thirdly, that it exercises those functions over a certain territory inside which its jurisdiction is both exclusive and all-embracing."¹²

There is little point in constructing definitions so narrowly as to exclude most political formations in world history. This is emblematic of a more general rift between legalistic and political science approaches, focusing on historically determined features that are limited to Western Europe as constitutive elements of any conceptualization of the state, and the more heuristic, malleable, and inclusive approaches of history, anthropology, and sociology.¹³ A related problem is the need to distinguish between the modern "nation-state" and its features and less cohesive and encompassing premodern states, which were the norm for several millennia. At the very least, use of the term "nation" should be avoided in discussions of premodern states.¹⁴ It is true that the nation-state can be

Studying the State

described in terms that do not differ from the general definitions presented above. Thus, in Anthony Giddens's deliberately broad conception:

"The nation-state, which exists in a complex of other nation-states, is a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence."¹⁵

Yet even in this case, membership in a state system is a conceptual requirement, as one nation needs to define itself against others. The nation-state is both a nation and a modern state. While a modern state can be defined, with Weber, via its reach and organization—claiming "binding authority, not only over the...citizens...but also to a very large extent over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction"¹⁶—the nation is best understood as "an imagined political community...imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign," limited, that is, by the existence of others outside its boundaries; sovereign, in its autonomy from the dynastic realm; and ideally conceived as a community of "deep, horizontal comradeship."¹⁷ Nation-states function as "the preferred, favoured objects of identification and willed adherence,"¹⁸ a critical break from the structural antagonism of state and local community that characterized most or perhaps all premodern states other than microstates.¹⁹ As we will see in the fourth section, the features of the nation-state cannot be transposed onto most earlier polities.

I conclude this section with a definitional clarification that is essential for the understanding of the remainder of this chapter and indeed of our entire volume. Whereas states may originate or be created in the sense that a polity transitions (p. 9) from a different level of organizational development into conditions that approximate the principal criteria of state-ness outlined above, this development must not be seen as a finite process. "States are never 'formed' once and for all. It is more fruitful to view state formation as an ongoing process of structural change and not as a one-time event."²⁰ States are constantly being made and remade: "shaped by their own contests as well as broader economic and social trends, polities are always 'becoming.'"²¹ We therefore employ the term "state formation" to describe the development of states overall, and not just to apply to their beginnings.

Origins

This section focuses on three issues: the relationship of states to less complex forms of organizations, global trends in the emergence of states, and the specific causes underlying the original creation of states.

The state has long been placed in an evolutionary sequence from small and simple to larger and complex. Different labels have been applied to different levels of organizational complexity: where Elman Service speaks of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and

Studying the State

states, Fried thinks in terms of egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies.²² These categories do not properly match: though bands may be egalitarian, tribes as well as chiefdoms may be ranked, and chiefdoms as well as states are stratified. Allen Johnson and Timothy Earle have more recently preferred a taxonomy of family-level groups (consisting of foragers), local groups (in the form of villages, clans, and Big Man collectivities), and regional polities (such as simple and complex chiefdoms, and archaic and agrarian states).²³ There is now broad agreement that such schemes, in whichever way they are articulated, must not be understood as tracking a “natural” progression, with simpler groups necessarily developing into more complex ones; nor that there is only a single line of development; nor that development is always unidirectional. “Multilinear” evolution has become the dominant concept.²⁴

Even so, the conceptualization of formations at different levels of complexity remains useful, if only as ideal types. In the most general terms, bands and tribes, or family-level and local groups, are characterized by small size, informal leadership, and low economic development. Tribes can best be defined as groups that create social roles by ascribing social importance to kinship, constituting political communities that are anchored in (imagined) descent groups in that they rely on the notion of shared descent for political integration.²⁵ Observing that the earliest states do not appear to have developed out of tribes, or indeed that tribal groups do not appear to have played any significant role in this process, Patricia Crone interprets tribal organization as an alternative rather than a direct precursor to the state: it was only when states became dominant that tribes were absorbed into them or adopted state organization as a competitive strategy.²⁶

(p. 10) Chiefdoms, by contrast, are much more closely linked to the emergence of the state. As their size could exceed that of small states, it is particularly important to identify structural features that permit demarcation.²⁷ The defining criteria of the chiefdom is the absence of a state apparatus (a negative, retrospective criterion) as well as a propensity to fission, a feature it shares with lower-complexity entities: thus, Claessen and Skalník define chiefdoms as “socio-political organizations with a centralized government, hereditary hierarchical status arrangements with an aristocratic ethos but no formal, legal apparatus of forceful repression, and without the capacity to prevent fission.”²⁸

By developing the feature of governmental centralization, chiefdoms are commonly seen as an essential precursor to the state, which—as noted in the previous section—shares this feature but expands it into more elaborate administrative structures and more stable territoriality.²⁹ Fission is a (horizontal) response to scalar stress—caused by decision making among too many units—whereas superordination to hierarchy is a (vertical) alternative. The state can be defined as a means to restrain fission.³⁰

Fission may become less likely with overall development, both because of circumscription (see below) and because of infrastructural consequences of sedentarism.³¹ And indeed, in the most general terms, the appearance of states was a function of overall levels of socioeconomic development that was in turn shaped by fundamental ecological circumstances. As ecological conditions stimulated responses in terms of demography,

Studying the State

nutrition, and technology, later developments occurred within these constraints, with geography, flora, fauna conferring specific advantages in certain areas, giving them a head start. Broadly speaking, therefore, those parts of the globe that first developed agriculture were also the first to experience the rise of states: priority in agrarian development translated to priority in state creation. This was ultimately a function of the increase in population size and density, surplus production, and organizational demands facilitated by sedentary farming. Agriculture thus served as a precondition for the emergence of states as centralized political organizations governing territory: a settled lifestyle created demand for control of territory and food storage, both of which can be linked to division of labor and resource extraction. It was therefore not by coincidence that the earliest states appeared in the Fertile Crescent, followed by the Indus Valley, the fringes of the Central Plain of China, and later central Mesoamerica and the northern Andean region. The general model of differential development contingent on ecological endowments, most famously enunciated by Jared Diamond, has finally begun to be formally substantiated with respect to both modern economic development and the creation and further development of states.³²

However, once we move beyond ultimate mechanisms of causation, specifics become more varied and a general model of proximate mechanisms more difficult to establish. States developed in very different environments, including arid river valleys with irrigation, as in Mesopotamia and Egypt; temperate river valleys, as in northern China; highlands, as in central Mexico and the Andes; and forests or savannas, as in Yucatan and among the Yoruba.³³ An attempt to bridge the gap (p. 11) between ultimate (biogeographical) and proximate causation models is provided by Peter Peregrine and Carol and Melvin Ember's causal model of state origins that observes—reduced to the statistically strongest linkages—a causal arrow from the presence of domesticates (as in Diamond's model) to sedentarism, which leads to increasing population density as well as rising inequality that drive the switch from food collection to food production, which in turn enables growing nucleation (into villages and towns) and stratification, both of which are conducive to the creation of states.³⁴

This model highlights preconditions of state creation rather than the mechanisms driving the process. These mechanisms have been much debated in the literature.³⁵ Different approaches coalesce into clusters: the fundamental divide is between managerial, functionalist, or integrative theories on the one hand and conflict or stress theories on the other.³⁶ According to the former, state structures develop in order to manage risk and technological complexity, for instance trade or irrigation. They envision a kind of “social contract” in which the state provides benefits through managing complexity, by coordinating and organizing large numbers of people. In conflict theories, the state arises out of competition within a given group (i.e., between strata or “classes”) and between groups. In this view, the state depends on and maintains and reinforces inequality.

In managerial theories, state members benefit from economic redistribution and the provision of public goods, as well as from information processing and coordination of the division of labor. Some models privilege trade or economic exchange, with groups

Studying the State

responding to differential access to traded goods, and increasing economic complexity leading to increasing political complexity. State formation is seen as a process of being part of larger systems of interaction.³⁷ A special variant, irrigation theory, associated with Karl Wittfogel and holding that the need for irrigation required state organization, is now discredited due to the priority of irrigation to the state or its autonomy from it: at best, irrigation may serve to increase state power, in a mutual intensification process.³⁸

Conflict theory conceives of the state as a mechanism for the production and perpetuation of inequality. Marxist theory focuses on class conflict, viewing the state as an instrument of ruling class that allows rulers to appropriate a greater share of the surplus. In this view, stratification endogenously created demand for a state apparatus to control the population. The classic formulation is Friedrich Engels's claim that

“[a]s the state arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but also arose in the thick of the fight between the classes, it is normally the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by its means becomes also the politically dominant class and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.”³⁹

The two main problems with this approach are that the ruling class has rarely been coextensive with the economically dominant class and that the state instead both enjoys autonomy from and enters into dialectical tensions with the wealthy (p. 12) elite; and that harsh stratification is not found outside states, which suggests that stratification might be more of a product rather than a cause of state creation.⁴⁰ While integrative theories see inequality as a result of the state, conflict theory requires it to be antecedent.⁴¹ However, Service's contention that stratification is implausible before the state may well go too far.⁴² While stratification-focused variants of conflict theory privilege conflict within groups, others put more emphasis on intergroup conflict as a driving force.⁴³ The two perspectives converge, however, insofar as the spoils of war accrue unevenly, thereby reinforcing inequality within the group. Population growth is seen as an engine of both intra- and intergroup conflict as it raises demand for scarce resources that precipitate stratification as well as warfare.

The most sophisticated version of stress theory is Robert Carneiro's "circumscription" model that combines demographic growth, warfare, and territorial boundedness or "circumscription." In his view, "only a coercive theory can account for the rise of the state." Population growth leads to conflict, but if people cannot move sideways, they need to organize better and conquer others. Limitations of movement can arise from geography as well as nearby population concentrations. Resource concentration contributes to this process by attracting people to certain areas, thereby stimulating population growth and conflict. Warfare is seen as a mechanism of political evolution, creating larger units. "Competitive exclusion" (from access to resources) is intensified by growing population density.⁴⁴ In a systematic comparative study of early states, Claessen and Skaln  k find that population growth and pressure as well as war or the threat of war were among the most common preconditions of state creation, concluding that "state

Studying the State

formation is not caused by war, but is greatly *promoted* by war.”⁴⁵ Criticism has focused on the lack of geographical circumscription in some pristine states (such as northern China and among the Maya and Yoruba) and the fact that warfare may occur without population pressure.⁴⁶ The latter is certainly consistent with Darwinian theory, which predicts conflict to gain access to resources that promote reproductive success regardless of whether resources are particularly scarce.⁴⁷ Moreover, it has been remarked that this kind of competition drives not only intergroup relations but also intragroup conflict and stratification.⁴⁸ All this speaks in favor of a more inclusive version of circumscription theory that allows for class conflict as well as warfare and for social or political forms of circumscription.

At the risk of oversimplification, it appears that scholars working in areas with a strong focus on material culture—archaeologists and many anthropologists—tend to incline toward managerial perspectives because they arise organically from the study of the material record. Historians and cognate social scientists, on the other hand, privilege conflict and inequalities that may not be as clearly expressed in the material record but are more dominant in textual evidence. This alone suggests that this theoretical dichotomy may be more apparent than real and a function of different emphases. It has consequently repeatedly been observed that integrative and conflict theories are not mutually exclusive but merely highlight different aspects of interdependent processes.⁴⁹ For instance, David Christian notes that (p. 13) conflict theories resemble predator/prey relations in population biology whereas managerial theories resemble the evolution of complex systems with increasing division of labor, as within multicellular organisms or animal groups: only a combination of both perspectives can fully account for observed outcomes.⁵⁰

The quest for an overarching explanation of the emergence of states seeks to address Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s paradox that “man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”⁵¹ Regardless of whichever public goods the state delivered, what it brought was a transition from power based on consent to power based on coercion.⁵² The pre-Columbian American experience underlines that there is nothing accidental or contingent about this process, given that it unfolded independently in different parts of the world. Because of this parallelism, theories of state origins must be generalizable, whereas eclectic explanation would merely obscure what mattered most.

Nevertheless, as Cohen concludes upon reviewing a host of factors—such as population pressure, long-distance trade, location, warfare, conquest, defense, internal strife, and the benefits of centralized control—none of them is sufficient (and in some cases even consistently antecedent) to account for state creation. For this reason, our explanations cannot be narrowed down to single-variable models: rather, the process of state creation has to be conceived of as systemic. Circumscription theory notwithstanding, universally valid configurations of circumstances are difficult to specify: in one cross-cultural survey, Claessen and Skalník find that whereas the existence of a surplus was a necessary condition of state creation, ideological activities were only of secondary importance; elaboration of social inequality was a consequence, not a cause, of state formation while

Studying the State

the role of warfare, conquest, and cultural borrowing is impossible to generalize.⁵³

Moreover, there may be a minimum demographic threshold as integrated groups that grow beyond a few thousand members begin to require significant organizational infrastructure, although more dispersed groups can be larger in size.⁵⁴

Claessen and Skalník stress positive feedback and acceleration. Just as with state formation in general, the initial stages of state creation are best seen as a process of emergence.⁵⁵ What is striking is the convergent nature of this process: as Bruce Trigger has found by studying some of the earliest states in different parts of the world, a great deal of uniformity arose out of very different chiefdoms, and in very different environments, an outcome that speaks loudly against relativistic approaches to state creation.⁵⁶ In Cohen's words, "Whatever starts the sequence off tends to change other qualities of political, social, economic, and cultural life so that from a number of different starting points, following different trajectories of change, very comparable results ensue." Once authority structure—for whatever reason—becomes more permanent and supralocal, "the hierarchical structure itself feeds back on all societal factors to make them more closely into an overall system that supports the authority structure."⁵⁷

This means that however interesting the specific circumstances of state creation are in principle, over time these circumstances are overridden by the convergent development of state structures. What is more, this convergence went (p. 14) hand-in-hand with the rapid spread of the state as the dominant mode of sociopolitical organization over much of the human species. Although only very rough guesstimates are feasible, it appears that from very small beginnings some five thousand or more years ago, the state soon became the demographically dominant type of human political organization. By the middle of the second millennium BCE, at a time when states covered not more than 1 percent of the earth's surface, they might perhaps already have claimed as many as half of all people on earth, mainly in the Middle East but increasingly also in India and China. By the beginning of the Common Era, states had extended their control to one-tenth of the land mass but closer to three-quarters of the species, contained mostly within just four imperial super-states. Despite the relatively recent origins and slow spatial spread of the state, the overwhelming majority of all people who ever lived have thus lived within the shells of states.⁵⁸ This marks it out as one of the most competitive cultural institutions of humanity.

Categories

Beyond sharing the basic features laid out in the opening section, states have historically varied so much that many attempts have been made to classify them according to different sets of criteria. Some scholars have focused on administrative structure, ranging from simple binary definitions to more elaborate schemes. Thus, Weber maintains that “all states may be classified according to whether they rest on the principle that the staff of men themselves own the administrative means, or whether the staff is ‘separated’ from these means of administration”; in other words, whether they were patrimonial or bureaucratic in nature.⁵⁹ However, there is no clear boundary between the two, and early bureaucratic systems retained strong patrimonial elements.⁶⁰

A much more complex taxonomy based on structure has been developed by Claessen and Skalník for their type of the “early state,” which occurred in “inchoate,” “typical,” and “transitional” varieties. In the first type, kinship and community ties still dominated relations in the political field; specialists were rare; taxation was primitive or ad hoc; close contacts and reciprocity existed between rulers and ruled. In the “typical” phase, kinship ties were counterbalanced by territorial ones; appointment counterbalanced heredity of office; nonkin officeholders were more important; but redistribution and reciprocity were still dominant. At the “transitional” stage, appointed officials had come to dominate; kinship influences were marginalized; and prerequisites for market economy and classes existed.⁶¹ While the “early state” appears to have been based on concepts of reciprocity and genealogical distance from the ruler, with development, ideological components weakened and managerial and redistributive aspects became more dominant. The “early state” is thought to have ended when state ideology ceased to (p. 15) be based on the concepts of the ruler’s supernatural power or perpetuating reciprocal obligations.⁶²

Others prefer morphological characteristics. Thus, at the earliest stage of state formation, Trigger recognizes only two types of states, namely “city-states” and “territorial states,” the former representing an urban center and its hinterland (usually embedded in a group of interacting polities) and the latter larger entities with multiple administrative centers that were dominated by residents linked to the state. The “territorial state” is perceived as different from—and developing into—the type of “regional kingdom” that was characterized by more unfettered urbanism.⁶³ In a similar vein, Ernest Gellner and Anthony Giddens favor a fundamental distinction between city-states and large agrarian empires.⁶⁴

Shmuel Eisenstadt, by contrast, reckons with five basic types of premodern states that combine structural and morphological features: patrimonial empires, nomad or conquest empires, city-states, feudal states, and what he terms “historical bureaucratic empires.” For him the main difference lies between the last one and all others, determined by different levels of centralization.⁶⁵ However, as nomad empires were either patrimonial or bureaucratic, they may not constitute a separate type, although they may have been

special in terms of their capacity for collective action.⁶⁶ By contrast, Finer proposes four types of states—city-states, “generic” states, national states, and empires. The “generic” state is his equivalent of the “territorial” state (or “toponymic” or “country-state”), which he sees as an antonym not to the city-state but to purely feudal systems.⁶⁷ (Hansen likewise objects to the term “territorial” state because all states that were not nomadic had a territory; he prefers “country-state” or “macro-state.”⁶⁸) Alternatively or simultaneously, Finer classifies states depending on the degree of centralization and standardization of administration and cultural homogeneity: this yields four possible permutations, namely states that score high in both areas, or in just one, or in neither.⁶⁹ John Kautsky, on the other hand, regards the distinction between (traditional) “aristocratic empires” and “commercialized empires” as the most important one. (He uses “empire” as synonymous to “territorial state.”)⁷⁰ Michael Smith develops a politico-economic typology based on levels of commercialization and the political system: pertinent examples include the uncommercialized territorial state of early dynastic Egypt, the intermediate commercialized city-states of Sumer, the intermediate commercialized empire of Assyria, advanced precapitalist commercialized city-states in Old Assyria and classical Greece, and the advanced precapitalist commercialized Roman empire.⁷¹

Some entities such as nomad states and nation-states (and perhaps also feudal states) fall outside the geographical and geographical remit of this book. We are dealing primarily with city-states and larger, multicomunity “generic” states, the earliest of which conform to Trigger’s concept of the “territorial state” while most are regional kingdoms or empires. The following section surveys scholarship on the characteristics of “generic” or country-states before we move on to consider the specifics of “empires” and “city-states.”

(p. 16) Properties

Any attempt to define the common characteristics of early states inevitably paints with a frightfully broad brush, but the exercise may nevertheless be useful.⁷² We focus here on states that encompass a number of communities. (The main state-level exception to this pattern, the autonomous city-state, is discussed separately.) The broadest model is perhaps Gellner’s survey of the agrarian state or agro-literate polity. He conceives of it as stratified, horizontally segregated layers of a military, administrative, clerical, and sometimes commercial ruling class that sits atop laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers. The horizontal orientation of the elite is what keeps the state together. The state was primarily interested in extracting taxes and maintaining peace but not in promoting lateral communication between communities. Although the religious establishment might have sought the latter, it could not succeed in the absence of mass literacy and other constraints: “In the agrarian order, to try to impose on all levels of society a universalized clerisy and a homogenized culture with centrally imposed norms, fortified by writing, would be an idle dream.” The main organizing principle was that of

Studying the State

community versus state: communities were either self-governing, as in city-states, tribes, or peasant communes, but more often incorporated into larger states: "A very characteristic political form is, of course, one which fuses these two principles: a central dominant authority co-exists with semi-autonomous local units." "The power-holders are caught in a field of tension between local communities...and a horizontal estate or caste."⁷³ As a result of these segmentations, as John Hall and Kautsky point out, agrarian civilizations are not "societies," because this concept presupposes a set of norms shared by all members of a territory; instead, we are dealing with societies of elites and nonelite groups. Politics concerned the elite, which sat atop peasant communities, unable to penetrate far into them.⁷⁴

In her survey of premodern societies, Patricia Crone likewise seeks to capture the essence of early states.⁷⁵ While the provision of welfare and dispensation of justice were upheld as ideological claims, actual government tended to be minimal, providing what she aptly calls a "protective shell." The state's success in maintaining law and order was necessarily rather limited: given deficient policing, harsh punishment had to serve as a symbolic deterrent. Self-help remained crucial for both welfare and order. This was a mixed blessing: while it kept people under control, it interposed layers between the state and its subjects, thereby reducing state penetration. Arbitrary exercise of power arose from lack of information and of generalized power; ad hoc measures were common, encouraging predatory rule and fostering general distrust of government. Integration was undesirable because it could not be accomplished by the state, and therefore should not be accomplished by others either. "Since the state could neither penetrate nor integrate the society it ruled, it sat on top of a myriad of ethnic, linguistic and religious communities and a myriad of autonomous self-help groups over which it had little control, regulating the surface without getting very far underneath." The political organization of (p. 17) agrarian states encouraged a "*power standoff...in which different kinds of power counteract...each other.*"⁷⁶ As a result the state was generally better at preventing "things from happening...than at generating energy." Crone favors the concept of the "capstone" state that keeps everything in place but does not stimulate further development. Capstone government was the response to the problem of organizing large numbers of people over large areas with inadequate resources. Empires enjoyed mostly "extensive power" for organizing large numbers over large distances for minimal cooperation. Intensive organization was more typical of small polities. This created a high propensity for disintegration, since elements of the state could easily be reshuffled: hence the most powerful states could be toppled by small peripheral groups. Government was semiprivate in nature, and elite-building was crucial—the creation of a state elite out of diverse holders of power to support rulers. This entailed a measure of control over high culture and religion. Officeholders representing the center and landowners, from among whom the former were often recruited, were locked in a tug-of-war, a problem to which we will return below. Countermeasures included the sale of offices, the pitting of parts of the elite against others, and the employment of foreigners, eunuchs, or celibate priests. The state meant the masses to retain their freedom to ensure they were subordinate to the center rather than to local elites, yet their freedom often had to be sacrificed to buy

Studying the State

elite support. Merchants (and merchant towns) posed problems because they could not be fully controlled or suppressed, especially since their services were useful; their ideological derogation was common. The state feared horizontal linkages in the general population and either fought or co-opted them. Religion cut both ways, helping the center gain authority but also allowing the masses to challenge the center; it served as a principal conduit of communication between different elements of population.

Under these circumstances, any claim on an effective monopoly of violence would necessarily have to be very limited. In David Christian's words, traditional states had "little authority over the more localized forms of violence used to collect taxes, prosecute offenders or deal with banditry, or right local injustices," powers that were exercised by local elites and kinship groups. Violence was most pervasive within the household, employed to maintain the power of males and seniors.⁷⁷ Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast also note that monopoly on violence is a recent development:

"In natural [i.e., premodern] states, power, violence, and coercion reside in the dominant coalition. The dominant coalition depends on the threat of violence to maintain balance among elites, and thus dispersed control of violence is a general characteristic of the coalition structure."⁷⁸

In practice, there were of course many shades of "state-ness" in terms of actual control and integration.⁷⁹ However, it is important to appreciate, with Giddens, that

"[i]t is misleading to describe the forms of rule typically found in non-modern states as 'government,' if 'government' means a concern of the state with the (p. 18) regularized administration of the overall territory claimed as its own. *Traditional states did not 'govern' in this sense.* Their 'polities' were mainly limited to the governance of conflicts within the dominant classes, and within the main urban centres."

This was due to the state's limited "administrative power," which he defines as "control over the timing and spacing of human activities."⁸⁰

Mann distinguishes between two kinds of state power, namely "despotic" power—"the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups"—and ultimately more significant "infrastructural" power—"the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm," which corresponds to Giddens's "administrative" power. In his pithy summary,

"(1) State infrastructural power derives from the social utility in any particular time and place of forms of territorial centralization which cannot be provided by civil society forces themselves; (2) The extent of state despotic power derives from the inability of civil society forces to control those forms of territorial centralization, once set up."

Studying the State

As Giddens notes, “‘power of life and death’”—in the sense of being able to punish the disobedient—is not the same as the capability of controlling the day-to-day lives of the mass of the population, which the ruler is not able to do.” According to Mann, different configurations of both types of power translate to different state types: feudal when both are low; imperial when despotic power is high and infrastructural coordination is low; bureaucratic the other way round; and authoritarian when both powers are highly developed. The long-term trend in infrastructural power has been growing, whereas despotic power has always oscillated.⁸¹

Goldstone and Haldon stress the importance of “unofficial infrastructures” upon which official administrative structures are built, such as household administration, clerical media, networks of trade rights, and local ideological identities: “Wider structures of governmental administration arise out of a multiplicity of infrastructural relationships, many of which remain entirely invisible to the historian because of the nature of the available evidence but which should always be borne in mind.”⁸² This is of course very much true of the ancient state.

Trigger attempts to define the characteristic features of early states by analyzing seven of the best-documented early states in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, focusing on sociopolitical organization, economy, and cognitive and symbolic aspects.⁸³ In the first of these three spheres, he observes that all of these states were monarchies, with kings acting as symbolic unifiers. As already noted, he recognizes only two state types, city-states and territorial states, and two types of administration, delegational and bureaucratic. He notes that this very limited range of variation speaks against relativistic perspectives.⁸⁴ Conspicuous consumption played a central role, manifesting and reinforcing power relationships. While territorial (p. 19) states developed unitary elite art and culture—matching the horizontal structure of Gellner’s top strata—rural forms varied, and city-states were more culturally integrated. Massive state investment in religion was common, with divine hierarchies reflecting the human social order and its requirements: “Cross-cultural uniformities in the religious beliefs of early civilizations resulted from analogous reflections on the taxation systems that were generically common to all these societies. Sacrifice projected the taxation system into the cosmic realm.” This points to the mental construction of analogous religious concepts under similar conditions and their use to stabilize convergent forms of sociopolitical organization. Relations with the supernatural and attendant secret knowledge were kept under elite control.⁸⁵

Trigger’s work covers some of the same ground as Claessen and Skalník’s earlier project to define and analyze what they called the “early state.” Their initial analysis rests on twenty-one cases but additional states are covered in subsequent surveys.⁸⁶ At the minimum, the “early state” had a population sufficient to enable social categorization, stratification, and specialization; a centralized government; membership defined by residence within its territory; independence, at least de facto; regular surplus; enough social stratification to distinguish rulers and ruled; and a common ideology on which legitimacy was based.⁸⁷ Claessen classifies different cases using a large variety of

Studying the State

variables such as territorial boundaries, independence, population density, type of capital, urbanization, type of center, type of infrastructure, various economic variables, various social categories, ideological position of ruler, legal arrangements, and features of administration.⁸⁸

Kautsky conceptualizes a different kind of early state by drawing a distinction between (traditional) “aristocratic empires” and “commercialized empires,” defining the former as polities in which aristocrats had not yet yielded at least some of their power to merchants and government was not yet being conducted in good part in line with commercial considerations: Afro-Eurasian specimens include Old Kingdom Egypt, Achaemenid Persia, Shang and Western Zhou China, and the sub-Roman Germanic successor states. By contrast, Babylonia, Phoenicia, Greece, and Rome are excluded as being in the process of being commercialized, although he stresses that the impact of this process should not be overrated and many “aristocratic” features were retained. He considers commercialization significant because it made merchants a more important source of state revenue, which reduced the aristocracy’s ability to rule according to their traditional standards.⁸⁹ These aristocrats are defined as exploiters of peasants, forming a ruling society superimposed on separate societies of peasants, much as in Gellner’s scheme. The state serves primarily as an extractive organization, within which aristocrats compete for control over peasants as producers of surplus, which renders war endemic. While aristocrats ceaselessly change positions (as rulers, state agents, or lords), aristocratic rule as such was stable. Aristocrats and peasants were not merely different classes, they lived in different societies. Aristocratic government was both shallow (as communities governed themselves) and decentralized, with even so-called bureaucratic states differing from others only in matter of degree. Decentralization resulted (p. 20) from poor communications as well as exploitative relationships between aristocrats and peasants, given that the central aristocracy always depended on the local aristocracy for the collection of revenue. This shaped aristocratic ideology: labor was seen with contempt, as was—with increasing commercialization—commerce; only robbing and raiding were considered honorable. The need for war was thus matched by the quest for glory. The religion of the aristocracy was perpetuated to maintain legitimacy in their own eyes.⁹⁰

While this stark assessment of early states may strike some observers as overly reductive, especially observers who are used to greater consideration of functional aspects, this perspective—which, as we must always remember, excludes community-sized polities and therefore focuses on the relations between center and communities—corresponds well with approaches developed for medieval and modern European state formation. It therefore helps bridge the gap between anthropological and sociological research on early states on the one hand and the historical sociology of the “Western” state on the other, a gap that is commonly unacknowledged, let alone addressed, in more disciplinarily compartmentalized scholarship.

For Tilly, the “essential minimum” of state activities comprises four kinds:

Studying the State

“Statemaking: attacking and checking competitors and challengers within the territory claimed by the state;

warmaking: attacking rivals outside the territory already claimed by the state;

protection: attacking and checking rivals of the rulers’ principal allies, whether inside or outside the state’s claimed territory;

extraction: drawing from its subject population the means of statemaking, warmaking, and protection.”⁹¹

All these activities involved application of force and therefore favored a state monopoly on concentrated violence. They created different organizations: for the first activity, control agents within the state’s territory; for the second, armies; for the third, both of the former as well as courts; and for the fourth, fiscal institutions. Not only was force crucial for the practical execution of these activities, it also underpinned their perceived legitimacy: If “[l]egitimacy is the probability that other authorities will act to confirm the decisions of a given authority,” it is the more readily available the more power a challenged authority controls.⁹²

Since the production of violence enjoyed large economies of scale, the state was in a privileged position to provide it. Frederic Lane conceives of states as sellers of protection to civilian customers. Inasmuch as the state manages to establish a monopoly on violence, it does not have to sell protection as the cost of production but is able to charge what he calls “monopoly profit” or “tribute,” defined as “payments received for protection, but payments in excess of the cost of producing the protection.” At the same time, clients enjoy “protection rent,” the profit derived from paying lower protection cost as their competitors.⁹³ Although Lane discusses “protection rent” very narrowly in terms of benefits enjoyed by traders, the concept applies more generally to state subjects, who may enjoy more or less protection (p. 21) at a given price from different states (although their options, which depend on mobility, are much more restricted than those of merchants). The more the state eliminates competing specialists in the use of violence, the more it is able to lower exactions due to lowered protection costs but may prefer to increase its monopoly profit by maintaining it at the highest level that does not invite the entrance of competitors. Actual outcomes depend on who controls the state. In theory, a customer-controlled enterprise (democracy) should take no tribute above actual costs; management-controlled ones (as in a junta) should prioritize the survival and maximum size of the enterprise (primarily the military) without seeking to minimize exactions in line with costs; whereas in the historically most common scenario, a monarchy, the ruler would want to limit the costs of the enterprise and keep the surplus as tribute, lacking the incentive to spend all revenue on the military. Tilly adds a fourth type, that of control by the dominant class, where tribute should be funneled to them.⁹⁴ This model is useful for ancient historians, with classical Athens exemplifying the first scenario, the Later

Studying the State

Roman Empire the second, most early states the third, and the Roman Republic the fourth. It certainly deserves more attention in the field.⁹⁵

Tilly criticizes Lane's perspective for its neoclassical focus, for imagining a free market for protection services, and for disregarding divisibility problems created by the public goods character of these services, which strongly favor the state in providing protection. Because of these constraints on societal choice, Tilly famously likens war and state making to organized crime: in his view, it makes more sense to regard the state as analogous to a protection racket than to envision it in terms of a social contract or a free market for state services.⁹⁶ This works better for early states than the social contract notion that, in Douglass North and Robert Thomas's words, government is "an organization that provides protection and justice in return for revenue" ... "[t]hat is, we pay government to establish and enforce property rights." In order to provide defense as a public good and avoid the free-rider problem, "the most effective solution was, and continues to be, the forming of governmental authorities and taxing of all beneficiaries."⁹⁷

In addition to the four principal spheres of state activity listed above, Tilly recognizes three others:

"adjudication: authoritative settlement of disputes among members of the subject population;

distribution: intervention in the allocation of goods among members of the subject population;

production: control of the creation and transformation of goods and services by members of the subject population."⁹⁸

From a Europeanist perspective, starting with the anarchic environment of the Middle Ages, the first four activities were prior and more essential while the latter three only gradually gained importance as states developed.⁹⁹ This raises the question whether this is necessarily true of all early states, which takes us back to the debate about state origins discussed in the second section. While adjudication systems tended to be feeble in all early states,¹⁰⁰ we may have to allow for the (p. 22) possibility that some early states were more involved in distributive and productive activities than some later ones.

Goldstone and Haldon note that the augmentation of coercive capacity by cooperative participation is a vital criterion of state success, and observe that due to the dominance of military institutions in Western history, the element of ideological integration (even if limited to elites) is often seen as secondary. They stress the role of ritual and priestly elites in some Asian contexts ("ritual polities") and consider the possibility that ideological integration in the form of "ritual penetration" allowed states to survive even with considerable administrative decentralization. Weak coercive ability required surplus redistribution and devolution of authority. Giddens also reminds us that not all states were equally militarized, contrasting Assyria with Tang China.¹⁰¹ Such differences may

Studying the State

well stem from the more cyclical nature of premodern state formation and the developmental trajectory of medieval and modern Europe, and depend on the intensity of conflict in a given state system. Nevertheless, it deserves attention that Kautsky's position matches Tilly's despite the former's focus on more ancient states. The struggle over control of surplus producers made war endemic, rendering other governmental functions auxiliary to taxing or military function or both, such as infrastructure services (with *corvée*), food storage, and fortifications: "Even the military protection from which villages and towns may benefit, and which is often held to be a service furnished by the aristocracy in return for the taxes it receives, is better understood as a mere incident of intraaristocratic competition that involves no reciprocity between the peasantry and the aristocracy."¹⁰²

At the same time, there is evidence that military and civilian state activities may have interacted in the creation of durable states: this relationship will be addressed at the end of this section.¹⁰³

Mann introduces a broader range of state functions that he considers necessary: monopolistic rule-making and maintenance of the internal order, military defense or aggression, maintenance of the communications infrastructure, and coordination of economic redistribution. He observes that these activities give the state room to play off interest groups against each other.¹⁰⁴ This leads us to the wider question of state autonomy. As Bruce Porter acknowledges, "[j]ust as there is a balance of power in the international system, there is also an internal balance of power between the state and civil society."¹⁰⁵ However, as we have seen, it is more helpful to think in terms of competing interest groups or classes than of anything like a single "society." State-elite relations are a critical determinant of state autonomy. The state is never just a medium for the dominant class to hold down and exploit the oppressed class but also, once established as an institutional complex, develops interests and purposes independent of any class. Haldon observes that although the state, as the product of social and economic relations, must not be reified in the process of analysis,

"it is important to stress that the state does have an identity as a field of action, as a role-constituting site of power and practices which can be independent, under certain preconditions, of the economic and political interest of those who dominate it."

(p. 23) At the same time, state autonomy is always constrained by dominant relations of production within a social formation.¹⁰⁶

Haldon identifies the "tributary" mode of production as "the basic and universal pre-capitalist mode of production in class societies," even as it coexists with other modes. Its key feature is the extraction of "rent"—in the form of tax, rent, or tribute—underwritten by "non-economic coercion [as] the basis for appropriation of surplus by a ruling class or its agents."¹⁰⁷ His approach is indebted to Samir Amin's concept of the "tribute-paying" mode, which divides the population between a peasantry and a ruling class that extracts tribute. Amin highlights the two fundamental sources of tension within traditional states,

Studying the State

which arises from “the contradiction between the continuing existence of the community and the negation of the community by the state; and also, as a result of this, the confusion of the higher class that appropriates the surplus with the class that is dominant politically.”¹⁰⁸

While the former places special importance on cooperation between the center and the community elites, and on the symbolic incorporation of the latter into a Gellnerian horizontally stratified statewide ruling class, the latter means that no matter how much economically dominant—primarily landowning—elites were integrated into the state, their interests never fully coincided.¹⁰⁹ Due to limited bureaucratization, elites generally had great leverage over the state. Both accommodating and excluding them made the state vulnerable in different ways.¹¹⁰ Reliance on elites to perform state functions constricted state autonomy whereas mobilization of subordinate groups may have enhanced it. However, benefices and prebendal rights required to compensate the latter tended to become assimilated to private landholding and attendant privilege, turning subordinates into members of the elite. This led to continuous struggle between rulers and state agents, with rulers aiming to make power and privilege dependent on state service and agents seeking open-ended benefits.¹¹¹ Just as Gerhard Lenski observes that landownership and public office were different means to the same end—the former for security, the latter for advancement¹¹²—it is also true that either one could lead to the other (in both ways). In principle, bureaucratization helped rulers capture “free” resources for autonomous goals. However, it also had the capacity of absorbing them if monitoring was insufficient, a basic principal-agent problem that affected fiscal systems in particular.¹¹³ If monitoring was strengthened, increasing bureaucratic complexity could weigh down the system, a feature discussed in the final section. Moreover, rotation of office often gave way to heredity as centralized bureaucratic states weakened.¹¹⁴

State organizations necessarily compete with dominant class(es) in appropriating resources, and may use these resources in ways that are at variance with dominant class interests; their main shared interest is to keep subordinate classes in place.¹¹⁵ Thus, while Haldon may be correct in maintaining that tax and rent are merely two forms of the same mode of surplus extraction, differentiated by political relation, from the perspective of the state it mattered whether surplus was extracted by the politically dominant class as tax or by the economically dominant (p. 24) class as private rent.¹¹⁶ Thus tax-rent competition was a major area of friction between the politically and economically dominant classes.¹¹⁷ The mode of surplus appropriation, together with the mode of surplus distribution, critically determined possibilities for state development. The state’s access to “free” resources was restricted by both elite resistance and weak economic development, which motivated the state to protect producers and their freedom so they could produce surplus for the state rather than landlords. At the same time, state policy could harm this group through military activity, and strong economic development could put resources beyond rulers’ control, constricting their autonomy in novel ways. In sum,

Studying the State

there was a whole set of factors restricting the autonomy and generalization of state power.¹¹⁸

For Mann, much of history was characterized by continuous struggle between the ideal types of the socially useful, centralized, despotic, universal state and a decentralized, particularistic aristocracy in possession of much of the power infrastructure. More specifically, he thinks that the process of “compulsory cooperation”—coerced increases in output in militarized economies—provided a multiplier effect that civil society could not provide by itself, but was in turn contained by logistical constraints. This accounted for a dialectic between militaristic centralization followed by fragmenting federalism: thus “imperial and feudal regimes do not merely oscillate (as Weber, Kautsky, and many others have argued), they are entwined in a dialectical process” [...]. “So the power autonomy of both states and classes has essentially fluctuated, dialectically.”¹¹⁹

Mann sees the state as the coalescence of various crystallizations of sources of social power. He identifies “four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political (IEMP) relationships,” which offer four alternative organizational means of control and function as “overlapping networks of social interaction” and form organizations and institutions.¹²⁰ In this taxonomy, political powers are “those of centralized, institutionalized, territorial regulation” and military powers those “of organized physical force wherever they are organized.” Ideological power can be wielded by those who monopolize a claim to meaning and comes in two flavors, sociospatially “transcendent,” moving beyond existing institutions and set apart from more secular authority structures, and “immanent morale,” belief systems that enhance the cohesion and power of an established social group. Economic power arises from production and exchange relations.¹²¹ He perceives a need to distinguish between the state (or political power) and military power because most historic states lacked a genuine monopoly of organized military force, or may not even have claimed it; and conquest was sometimes undertaken by groups independent of the state. By contrast, Poggi identifies only three forms of social power—economic, normative (or ideological), and political, with coercion and warrmaking subsumed within the latter. Haldon, on the other hand, criticizes Mann for neglecting the fact that both military and political power ultimately depend on access to and control over economic resources, with ideological power enjoying the greatest degree of autonomy once it has been constituted in a way that ensures its reproduction.¹²² State control over the various (p. 25) sources of social power varied. This situation is recognized by anthropologists by the concept of “heterarchy” (as opposed—or rather complementary—to hierarchy), derived from the observation that political, economic, or cultic centers need not be the same and that different functions can exist in a system without their arrangement being hierarchical: “Power can be counterpoised rather than ranked.”¹²³

Mann considers the territorial centrality of the state essential to providing it with a potentially independent basis for power mobilization. “Increases in state infrastructural power will territorialize social relations. If the state then loses control of its resources they diffuse into civil society, decentring and de-territorializing it.”¹²⁴ This power can be

Studying the State

measured in four key dimensions: the state's ability to extract resources, to monopolize military power, to assimilate elites and masses into the political system, and to implement policies and enforce rules. The economic power of the state is determined by the efficacy of revenue extraction; its political power by degree of integration; and its administrative power by bureaucratization. For states, warmaking was a means of mobilizing resources for their goals—and hence also “a means of attempting to reduce their dependence on classes.”¹²⁵

However, the scholarly focus on centralization must not obscure the significance of corporate strategies in state formation.¹²⁶ According to Richard Blanton, these include redistributive integration, euergetism and liturgies, decentralization of prestige goods systems, authority based on social contract, accountability of rulers, commonwealth government, decentralization of the sources of power, reflexive communication, semiautonomous functioning of lower-order subsystems, and ritual sanctification of corporate cognitive code.¹²⁷ This raises the question which systems are better at fostering collective action. Blanton and Lane Fargher approach early state formation through the lens of the rational choice theory of collective action, which addresses the problem that the rational and self-interested behavior of social actors may limit the potential for collective action and group solidarity. Drawing on thirty case studies from around the world—including Egypt, Athens, and Rome—they empirically test the explanatory potential of collective action theory. They compare the properties of different polities by coding key features, using as their main variables the provision of public goods, bureaucratization, principal control, and resource source. Revenue sources are classified as “external” when they are gained from narrow, wealthy constituencies (from taxing trade, establishing monopolies, and deriving income from state assets) that are “external” to a broad base of potential taxpayers. Conversely, “internal” sources are derived from that base. The central idea is that rulers are more likely to strike bargains when they are strongly dependent on surplus obtained from a large base of taxpayers, and that subjects lose bargaining power if rulers depend less on their revenue inputs.¹²⁸ They define public goods as roads, bridges, water supplies, public safety, redistribution, and investment in religion and welfare (but not in military activity: see below); bureaucratization as the feasibility of appeals, the degree of tax farming, modes of officeholder recruitment, detection and sanction of public (p. 26) agency, and the presence of salaried officials; and principal control as monitoring, principal adherence to moral codes, the role of high officials and councils, and restriction on the ruler's control of material and ideological resources and on the ruler's standard of living.¹²⁹

Their survey produces strong statistical support for a positive relationship between “internal” or “mixed” revenue sources and the other three variables: the correlation is strongest for the relationship between revenue source and public goods and for that between bureaucratization and principal control, and also quite strong for the relationships between revenue source and principal control and between bureaucratization and public goods, but least strong for the relationship between principal control and public goods. They conclude that broadly funded governments can be established and maintained only with great difficulties, facing the collective action

Studying the State

problem of taxpayer free-riding and noncompliance, and of power abuse by principals and agents; hence “the only way to build an enduring polity is through organizational change and the formulation of new cultural schemes, so that, in exchange for taxpayer compliance, rulers provide public goods, control the agency of officials (bureaucratization), and relinquish some aspects of their power (principal control) to validate their trustworthy participation in the collective enterprise.”¹³⁰

Some of their auxiliary findings are noteworthy, including the observation that cultural factors (such as ideals of rulership) have little actual impact unless they are backed up by a suitable administrative apparatus, or that polity size has no negative effect on collective action. Their finding that collective action is negatively correlated with exit options has implications for circumscription theory, confirming that the latter is conducive to state formation.¹³¹ However, there are several open questions about their “main model” according to which reliance on internal/mixed revenue sources motivates rulers to encourage taxpayer compliance by providing public goods and by developing a bureaucratic system capable of managing public goods and tax collection, and even to relinquish some elements of privilege and agency to instill trust. They are aware of the problem that actual taxpayer compliance is hard to measure, and note that it matters how revenue sources are determined. They do not however seem to think that the exclusion of all military activity from public goods—based on the somewhat anachronistic theory that only defensive activity would legitimately count as such—poses a problem, although it may well do so, given the pivotal importance of the military in conflict models of the state and the close relationship between revenue extraction and military activity. Efforts connected with warmaking might equally well be considered a quintessential collective action issue and crucial to any such investigation.¹³² It is also left unclear whether and in what sense states with broad resource bases were more successful (in terms of durability or otherwise) than their competitors. Yet despite these problems, their work provides a valuable counterweight to the reductive focus on coercion and exploitation exemplified by some of the scholarship discussed earlier in this section. More ancient states could profitably be studied in this way.

(p. 27) Empires

How do “empires” differ from the generic “agro-literate polities” discussed in the previous section?¹³³ Once again no single definition is available, especially as the term “empire” evokes size and power in a way that invites promiscuous usage. Recent definitions of imperial states focus on the element of subordination of peripheral communities (often former states) to a core or metropole that was originally made up of the conquering and ruling polity. For Michael Doyle, empire entails the “effective control, whether formal or informal, of a subordinated society by an imperial society.” The metropole’s political control—whether formal or informal—over the internal (and external, if applicable) policy of the periphery is regarded as critical: “a relationship,

Studying the State

formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political polity.”¹³⁴ (Conversely, control that is limited to external policy is better defined as “hegemony.”) For Finer and Susan Reynolds, domination by a core group is likewise the crucial criterion.¹³⁵ Size and diversity, especially differences between center and periphery and within the periphery, are other distinguishing characteristics. Thus, Stephen Howe defines empire as “a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest, and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries”; while Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper think of empires as “large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people”; and Goldstone and Haldon consider “foreign-ness” a marker of the imperial state, defined as “a territory (contiguous or not) ruled from a distinct organizational center (which may be mobile) with clear ideological and political sway over varied elites who in turn exercise power over a population in which a majority have neither access to nor influence over positions of imperial power.”¹³⁶

In an important elaboration of these views, Alexander Motyl emphasizes the fragmentation of the imperial periphery and the central position of the imperial core, envisioning empire as a

“hierarchically organized system with a hublike structure—a rimless wheel—within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channeling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery.”

These conditions prevailed regardless of whether empires were geographically “continuous” (that is, tightly massed and territorially contiguous) or “discontinuous” (loosely arranged and often involving overseas possessions).¹³⁷ Inasmuch as empires lacked clear-cut boundaries, the image of the wheel can be supplemented by astronomical similes of gravitational pull—empires are entities that draw peripheries beyond their direct rule into their orbit, a situation captured by Stanley Tambiah’s concept of the “galactic polity” or even better by Victor Lieberman’s “solar polity,” “in which provincial ‘planets’ revolved around a sun whose ‘gravitational pull’ diminished with distance. Insofar as each planet had its own satellite (p. 28) moons, its gravitational system replicated in decreasing scale the structure of the solar system as a whole.”¹³⁸ While different definitions single out particular attributes—be it core/periphery relations or diversity—what they all have in common is that they apply to imperial formations across history, from agrarian land empires to steppe empires and modern colonial empires with their European cores and global peripheries, and from the earliest Mesopotamian empires to the modern period.¹³⁹

The distinction between core and periphery and the “hublike structure” of empires accords particular importance to the relationship between the imperial center and its subordinate possessions, which can be very numerous, distant, and diverse. In order to maintain an imperial structure, the center must seek to achieve what Doyle labels

Studying the State

“transnational penetration” or “extension.”¹⁴⁰ While reference to the “nation” makes this term seem unnecessarily anachronistic, the underlying principle is valid. These extensions depend on the properties both of the center and the periphery. The center was usually a centralized state (although nomad empires may stretch this principle), whereas the periphery could take several different forms: tribal, patrimonial, feudal, fractionated, or made up of settlers originating from the center. Different types of peripheries adjusted differently to imperial rule: While patrimonial and feudal societies were amenable to collaboration, the incorporation of tribal groups caused great disruption and called for direct rule; rule over fractionated (i.e., high-participation) and settler peripheries proved to be the most unstable variant. In a sense, imperial rule mimicked interstate politics, with its need to manage relations between rather different entities.¹⁴¹

More specifically, given the realities of political conditions in most early states, it was the relationship between central and peripheral *elites* that was crucial. This required what Johan Galtung calls (once again in anachronistic language) “harmony of interest between the center in the Center nation and the center in the Periphery nation.” At the same time, significant links had to be limited to those between the center and individual peripheral units: in Motyl’s simile, empires have no “rim” because the periphery is not integrated and significant interactions between peripheries cannot occur without the intermediation of the core. The result is “a conceptually distinct core that dominates conceptually distinct peripheries bound minimally to one another.” The rimless spoke system worked well because it meant that peripheries could not easily band together against the center; they were structurally competitors and not cooperators because all of them were contributors and recipients of imperial resources; and their elites benefited from status being promoted by a distant center.¹⁴²

Empires came into existence in a variety of ways. Although conquest was the historically most common mechanism, empire “by invitation” is not unknown, as in the case of classical Athens or other alliance systems. Given traditional states’ propensity to engage in war and to seek to expand their resource base (see the final section), “imperialism” is not a phenomenon that requires special explanation, and may simply be defined, with Goldstone and Haldon, as the study of the subordination of periphery and its integration into the original state (in terms of ideological, (p. 29) fiscal, military, and administrative structures).¹⁴³ However, the circumstances of imperial expansion differed and are addressed by a number of theories of imperialism that privilege either conditions in the center such as militarism or capitalism (“metrocentric” theories) or in the periphery, when the center responds to developments in the periphery (“pericentric” theories). A third type, “systemic” theory, explains imperial formations with reference to power disparities between polities. Positional theories stress the importance of geopolitical location: thus, scholarship has repeatedly envisioned a “marcher state” advantage in forming empires, where polities flanking established cores that faced no serious competitors on their other border were in a good position to capture the cores and

Studying the State

develop diverse structures of rule.¹⁴⁴ In any event, structural theories are to be preferred over agency- or choice-centered intentionalist perspectives.¹⁴⁵

In Doyle's taxonomy, empires exert power in five dimensions—domain (their control over and impact on people's lives), scope (the types of behavior affected, that is, their control of policy beyond war), range (the extent to which state agents are able to reward and punish), weight (or effectiveness), and duration.¹⁴⁶ Mann prefers to distinguish between empires of domination and territorial empires, depending on the scale of their penetration of the peripheries.¹⁴⁷ This corresponds loosely to Eisenstadt's distinction between patrimonial and historical bureaucratic empires. In the former, the center impinges on communities via taxation, religious links, and the maintenance of peace. Linkages were commonly effected through local units and subcenters without undermining existing patterns. Law was limited to the administrative and criminal spheres, whereas civil law was locally upheld. The imperial center served as the keeper of a static, cosmic order under a ruler who mediated between human and divine. The accumulation and redistribution of "free" surplus was the main objective, and exploitation was expansive rather than intensive. More ambitious empires sought to reorganize their peripheries; symbolic access of the periphery to the center weakened the cultural separateness of local units.¹⁴⁸

Imperial formations became larger over time, a process tracked in detail by Rein Taagepera.¹⁴⁹ He distinguishes between three growth phases, from around 3000 to 600 BCE, from 600 BCE to 1600 CE, and afterward, which correspond to different "floors": in each period, the largest empires were consistently larger than the largest empire of the preceding period. After the initial appearance of large polities around 3000 BCE—the precise date is uncertain given uncertainties about the earliest Mesopotamian and Elamite formations—the threshold set by dynastic Egypt and the Akkadian empire was not significantly surpassed until the Neo-Assyrian empire. However, a massive discontinuity occurred only in the sixth century BCE with the creation of the much larger Achaemenid empire, which was subsequently matched by the Qin-Han and Roman empires. Only relatively minor increases occurred in the Umayyad and Mongol periods, and more importantly they proved short-lived. Only Russia and Britain eventually built substantially larger empires. For our purposes, it is the jump between the first and second of these periods that merits attention: While the territory of the largest state in the world fluctuated (p. 30) between 0.15 and 1.3 million square kilometers in the first phase, it never fell below 2.3 million and reached as high as 24 million in the second phase.¹⁵⁰ This leap went hand in hand with the emergence of a multiplicity of simultaneous large empires in different parts of the world, a development that shows a clear trend toward empire in general. Since state size is determined by the cost-benefit tradeoff between the benefits of size—such as lower per capita cost of public goods, better protection, larger markets, regional "insurance," and scope for redistribution—and the costs of resulting heterogeneity and logistical loads, the global expansion of imperiogenesis suggests that the former must frequently have outweighed the latter.¹⁵¹

Studying the State

At the same time, no trend increase in the average duration of empires has been found in a sample of seventy-eight cases ranging over 5,000 years.¹⁵² Imperial formations were only moderately durable: Motyl shows that—at least in the absence of interferences—empires developed parabolically, with distinct phases of growth, peak, and decline.¹⁵³ This meshes well with the observation that universal empires and state systems tended to alternate over time.¹⁵⁴ It appears that the only way for empires to survive in the long term was by transforming themselves into generic territorial states as metropole and periphery merged; this is true also of “nation-states,” many of which grew out of initially imperial relationships. In the broadest terms, therefore, empire can be seen as a developmental stage rather than a discrete type.¹⁵⁵ However, for most of history, and throughout the period covered in this volume, empires failed to transform but instead collapsed at some point. This ties in with the broader question of state breakdown more generally, which is discussed in the final section.

City-States

The city-state represents in many ways a counterpoint to agrarian empires, not just in terms of size but also in terms of internal structure.¹⁵⁶ It is the best-known—albeit not only—form of the “micro-state.”¹⁵⁷ Defined as “small, territorially based, politically independent state systems, characterized by a capital city or town, with an economically and socially integrated adjacent hinterland,” city-states usually occurred in clusters, often but not always as fairly evenly spaced units of comparable size.¹⁵⁸ Our understanding of the city-state as a state type has been greatly enhanced by the comparative assessment of thirty-five city-state cultures initiated by Hansen.¹⁵⁹ Systematic consideration of the global evidence enables Hansen to develop an ideal type (rather than a strict definition) of the city-state:

“a highly institutionalised and highly centralised micro-state consisting of one town (often walled) with its immediate hinterland and settled with a stratified population, of whom some are citizens, some foreigners, and, sometimes, slaves. Its territory is mostly so small that the urban centre can be reached in a day’s walk or less, and the politically privileged part of its population is so small that (p. 31) it does in fact constitute a face-to-face society. The population is ethnically affiliated with the population of neighbouring city-states, but political identity is focused on the city-state itself and based on differentiation from other city-states. A significantly large fraction of the population is settled in the town [...]. The urban economy implies specialisation of function and division of labor to such an extent that the population has to satisfy a significant part of their daily needs by purchase in the city’s market. The city-state is a self-governing but not necessarily an independent political unit.”¹⁶⁰

Studying the State

This synthetic characterization avoids excessive dependence on specific kinds of city-states that have loomed large in scholarship, most notably the Greek polis and the city-states of medieval Italy.¹⁶¹ It also makes it unnecessary to adopt the extreme emic position of abandoning the term “city-state” in favor of specific indigenous designations.¹⁶²

The origin of city-states is as uncertain as that of the earliest states in general.¹⁶³ Cross-cultural study yields no single reason for their existence: contributing factors include geopolitical circumstances, economic conditions (such as interstitial positions between macro-states), chronological precedence or simultaneity of urbanism over/with state formation, and devolution.¹⁶⁴ Although state creation without urbanism is not unheard of, most early states boasted cities, which suggests a close link between urbanization and the rise of the state.¹⁶⁵ In other words, the presence of cities does not distinguish city-states from territorial states. According to one line of thought, the city-state represents the only alternative to the early territorial state, as in Trigger’s contention that all early states were either one or the other, and his finding that early city-states and territorial states differed systematically in a variety of ways.¹⁶⁶ Charles Maisels likewise draws a contrast between the city-state and what he calls the “village-state” (the equivalent of Trigger’s “territorial state”) as the two main early types.¹⁶⁷ Azar Gat, for example, seeks to link the creation of city-states to defense, arguing that they are better described as “densely and centrally nucleated petty-polities” that emerged where larger-scale territorial unification did not occur early in political evolution, and the population coalesced for protection against raids.¹⁶⁸

By contrast, Joyce Marcus argues that territorial and city-states “were often *different stages in the dynamic cycles of the same states*, rather than two contrasting sociopolitical types,” and that clusters of city-states were invariably the breakdown product of earlier unitary states.¹⁶⁹ The problem with this position is that it requires not only conjectures about the nature of the earliest states in Khusistan and southern Mesopotamia but more importantly cannot properly account for the existence of the Etruscan and Latin city-state cultures of ancient Italy. It does, however, draw attention to the difficult and understudied problem of how to account for a transition from chiefdom to city-state. It is also consistent with what Peter Burke calls the “vacuum theory” of the city-state, which holds that the latter thrives where central authority is weak.¹⁷⁰

Despite a number of shared features such as belonging to wider cultural and linguistic zones, city-states differed in various ways: a clear distinction between (p. 32) insider-citizens and outsiders was common but not universal, nor was full independence. In terms of size, city-states did not normally exceed some 3,000 square kilometers without developing into a different kind of polity, such as the imperial formations originating from city-states such as ancient Rome or the Aztec triple alliance. Population ranged mostly in the thousands or tens of thousands, though once again outliers are known.¹⁷¹ The sociopolitical structure of city-states is their most noteworthy feature. The best-known cases—in ancient Greece and medieval Italy, Germany, and Switzerland—are associated with popular political participation and republicanism. A focus on these states encourages

claims that city-states represented a genuine alternative to traditional empires in that they existed for the benefit of their citizens and aimed to provide a better life for them.¹⁷² Such notions cannot be globally generalized. Even so, city-states tend to share certain features that are perhaps best understood as a function of size constraints. Thus, while far from all city-states were republics, most early republics were city-states. More generally, councils and assemblies were common even in those cases where monarchs were present. The clustering of city-states encouraged not just endemic conflict but also close diplomatic relations and sometimes federalism, a scalable alternative to the domination of the community by a central state that has been discussed in previous sections. While not all city-states were alike, it is nevertheless true that some modern features such as republicanism and federalism were only found in microstates, many of which were also city-states.¹⁷³ This is not surprising given that in the premodern period, republics needed to be small to work effectively.¹⁷⁴ Due to their interstitial position, city-states often experienced more dynamic economic development through commerce and capital formation, a phenomenon that was particularly conspicuous in medieval Europe.¹⁷⁵ This ties in with the larger Weberian theme of the autonomy of the European city as a distinctive feature of Western civilization.¹⁷⁶

Morris consequently presents the Greek polis—with its remarkable concentration of historically unusual features—as an alternative to Gellner’s model of the agro-literate state with stratified, horizontally segregated layers of elites and laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers that generally typified territorial and imperial states. The polis, by contrast, shows only weak horizontal and lateral insulation for citizens, strong insulation for slaves, and peripheralization of aliens. Stratified military, administrative, and clerical classes were absent. This best describes the case of classical Athens, which was a genuine “citizen-state” as well as a city-state, whereas other poleis may have been less structurally distinctive.¹⁷⁷ In its most extreme constitutional variant—direct democracy—the polis may not have been viable in the long run, as Garry Runciman has argued. By contrast, Rome and Venice evolved as citizen-states over time, assuming more traditional organizational features while preserving some institutional peculiarities of the city-state for their core citizenry.¹⁷⁸ The historically most common experience was therefore incorporation of city-state clusters into larger units or the creation of larger units and subsequent transformation of city-state centers. Long-term autonomy without either one of these outcomes required the absence or weakness of adjacent macro-states, as in the ancient Greek Aegean or in medieval Europe.

(p. 33) Dynamics

The dynamics of state formation have been the subject of a diverse body of theorizing. Regarding the origins of large, imperial states, some scholars emphasize what is known as the “marcher state” advantage, a condition that loosely corresponds to what world systems theorists call “semiperipherality.” A marchland position exists where a polity

faces an established “core” state but no comparable entities elsewhere because it is backed up against natural barriers or sparsely populated or in less developed areas. By contrast, “interior states”—which are part of a state system—block each other’s expansion, whereas marcher states are able to expand into outer peripheries. For marcher states, this reduces the number of fronts and enables them to concentrate their resources, improving the odds of success in war. Consequently, a marcher position is often thought to confer an advantage in empire building.¹⁷⁹ An equivalent view is being adopted in world systems theory, which attributes critical importance to “semiperipheral” positions, defined as a location between cores and peripheries or between two or more competing cores.¹⁸⁰ While this definition is broader than the narrower “single-front marchland” definition, proponents effectively tend to conflate marcher states and semiperipheral states by stressing their putative importance in imperiogenesis.¹⁸¹ Although a computer simulation of European state formation suggests that the strongest version of a marcher position—involving natural boundaries—may confer genuine competitive advantages, Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall note that no set of causes of benefits to marcher positions has been identified so far.¹⁸²

In his critique of this perspective, Peter Turchin observes that geopolitical position does not confer fixed advantages (a finding that does not rule out temporary advantages).¹⁸³ Noting that the concept of semiperipheral development has been insufficiently formalized to be testable, he develops a model in which a more specific set of circumstances is associated with large-scale state formation. This approach revolves around the notion of “metaethnic frontiers,” defined as “civilizational fault-lines” where different cultures (languages, religions) or lifestyles (sedentary vs. nomadic) meet. These contrasts are thought to create solidarity, the more so the more pronounced group differences are. The extent of pacification and population density is negatively correlated with this process: stateless environments and low densities are more conducive to this process, with ethnic division acting as a catalyst. Solidarity increases the capacity for collective action that drives state expansion. Turchin tests this theory for Europe between 500 and 1900 and finds a strong statistical relationship between metaethnic frontier position and the emergence of empire.¹⁸⁴ An extension of this survey into antiquity undertaken by Andrew Monson and myself has produced similar results. Moreover, Turchin’s survey of the origins of sixty-four empires that covered at least one million square kilometers up to 1800 shows a strong correlation between imperiogenesis and proximity to the most fundamental metaethnic frontier, that between the Eurasian steppe and the settled areas to the south.¹⁸⁵

(p. 34) A related question concerns the extent to which the development of particular states is determined by their being part of larger macrosocial systems. This is the main focus of interest of world systems theory, committed to the analysis of putatively significant interactions within “world systems” that are defined as “intersocietal networks in which the interaction (e.g. trade, warfare, intermarriage, information) are important

Studying the State

for the reproduction of the internal structures of the composite units and importantly affect changes that occur in these local structures.”¹⁸⁶

The most detailed taxonomy of different spheres of interaction has been developed by Chase-Dunn and Hall, who differentiate between bulk-goods networks (BGN), prestige-goods networks (PGN), political/military networks (PMN), and information networks (IN). Given logistic constraints, early BGNs were necessarily by far the smallest type of network; PMNs were comprised of states that engage in warfare and diplomacy, whereas both PGNs and INs were able to expand much farther because they required only minimal interaction and heavily relied on intermediation.¹⁸⁷ In antiquity and the Middle Ages, all these types of networks pulsed over time, growing and contracting as state power and demand for traded goods waxed and waned. Their impact on the constituent polities can be expected to have varied tremendously: while BGNs had the greatest influence, PMNs did so to a lesser degree, and PGNs and INs were the least important ones.¹⁸⁸

In the premodern period, BGNs were relatively small and focused on the sea and rivers (such as the Nile Valley, the Mediterranean under Roman rule, or the catchment area of the Great Canal in China), and often if not always contained within individual states. At the opposite end of the spectrum, PGNs and INs expanded early on, as shown by evidence of exchange between the Middle East and the Indus region or later between the Mediterranean and China in periods when more sustained contacts between these regions were lacking and indeed logistically unfeasible. Although the significance of control over prestige goods by elites, and hence their importance for state formation, should not be underestimated, PMNs had more substantial effect on state formation, with the possible exception of small interstitial entities that channeled trade in prestige goods. Ancient PMNs grew gradually, for instance from the Fertile Crescent into Iran (and intermittently the Indus Valley), the Mediterranean, and a growing part of Europe.

PMNs are equivalent to David Wilkinson’s concept of different “civilizations”—somewhat vaguely defined as regions characterized by “significant continuous interaction”—that gradually merged over time, generally by absorption into what he terms the “Central Civilization” that was created by the fusion of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian “civilizations” in the mid-second millennium BCE. This “Central Civilization” (forming a “central” PMN) became global only with European colonization and even later through conflict with Western powers and East Asian states.¹⁸⁹

Interaction within networks is often conceived of in terms of cores and peripheries, as well as semiperipheral regions in between. These concepts go back to Immanuel Wallerstein’s model of global core-periphery relations from the sixteenth (p. 35) century onward. Anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have applied this distinction to a wide variety of much earlier systems across Afroeurasia and the Americas.¹⁹⁰ These putative “world systems,” however, tend to lack the specificity of Wallerstein’s focus on the exchange of basic goods within the modern “world system”: the impact of premodern “world systems” is therefore difficult to ascertain. Yet if “core” and “periphery” are defined in very general terms as representing different levels of complexity and

Studying the State

population density, the potentially crucial element of dominance and subordination is lost.¹⁹¹ Optimistic notions of the influence of PGNs and INs over the past 5,000 years, associated above all with Andre Gunder Frank, have been balanced and tempered by other scholarship in this field.¹⁹² As tributary relations were more dominant than capitalist relations, core-periphery relations *within* states, especially imperial formations, were more important than exchange relations between states.¹⁹³ More generally, it is difficult to identify actual mechanisms that could account for social evolution, given that relations within early “world systems” are insufficiently encompassing to foster much integration.¹⁹⁴ It is not even clear whether city-states, which world systems theorists are inclined to view as mercantile and “capitalist” enclaves in an environment dominated by tributary accumulation, sufficiently conformed to this ideal type to be shaped by systemic forces: after all, early city-states also tended to strive for tributary extraction.¹⁹⁵ Observed synchronicities in development—such as state or urban size—in different parts of Afroeurasia illustrate the hazards of attributing causal force to long-range interactions. Exogenous factors such as climate change or disease may have been capable of synchronizing outcomes in separate populations.¹⁹⁶

International systems theory is likewise concerned with systemic features. Herbert Kaufman, in a study of the fragmentation and consolidation of state systems, identifies a spectrum of systems from fragmented systems such as city-states or tribes to multipolar systems; multiple, dual, or single hegemonies; and imperial hegemonies. This taxonomy can also be employed to classify ancient state relations, as Kaufman shows in a survey of state relations in the ancient Near East. Balance-of-power systems tended to be unstable and ended due to “bandwagoning,” the weaker states’ joining of stronger powers. This finding meshes well with the more generally observed oscillation between large empires and systems of smaller states.¹⁹⁷ Investigating the success and failure of balancing strategies is a central goal of international systems theory.¹⁹⁸

Balance-of-power issues receive so much attention because of their importance in post-Roman European history, which was characterized by abiding polycentrism. This raises the broader question whether state formation in post-Roman Europe in general was historically anomalous. This question is important because much theorizing about state dynamics is explicitly or implicitly informed by the medieval and modern European experience, a fact that might conceivably limit its applicability to the study of ancient states. This is particularly true of influential models of the connection between warmaking and state making that have yet to be adapted by ancient historians.¹⁹⁹ Warmaking and military organization are often considered crucial to state formation. Finer stresses the importance of military (p. 36) formats: he maintains that military organization is central to the establishment and perpetuation of polities and that the distribution of military power among different strata is a decisive determinant of regime type. He also stresses the interdependence of military format and resource extraction capacity, a nexus he calls the “coercion-extraction cycle.”²⁰⁰ As noted above, Tilly defines warmaking as the essential activity of the state and the driving force behind state

Studying the State

formation.²⁰¹ This is an elaboration of Otto Hintze's famous assertion that "all state organization was originally military organization, organization for war."²⁰²

This perspective owes much to the specifics of European history. Tilly's aim is to identify the causes of variation in European state formation over the past 1,000 years and of the eventual convergence upon the nation-state.²⁰³ In a nutshell, he argues that

within the limits set by the demand and rewards of other states, extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organizational structures of states. [...] The organization of major social classes, and their relations to the state varied significantly from Europe's coercion-intensive regions (areas of few cities and agricultural predominance, where direct coercion played a major part in production) to its capital-intensive regions (areas of many cities and commercial predominance, where markets, exchange, and market-oriented production prevailed).²⁰⁴

Different socioeconomic conditions required different extractive strategies, leading to different organizational forms of the state. Eventually, the advantage in warmaking enjoyed by states that combined features and can field large armies proved decisive.²⁰⁵

This model is grounded in the anarchic environment of the Middle Ages with its fractured authority and multiple powerholders resorting to violence. From these starting conditions, it is possible to envision a trajectory from "weak" to "strong" states, through a sequence of stages from patrimonialism (up to the late Middle Ages, with states relying on feudal levies, tribute, and domain rent); to brokerage (ca. 1400–1700, featuring mercenaries and states dependent on capitalists for loans and tax farming); to nationalization (ca. 1700–1850, with mass armies and direct state control of the military and fiscal apparatus), a development that culminates in the institutions of the modern nation-state. States relied on a mixture of two basic strategies, labeled "coercion-intensive" and "capital-intensive"—the former characterized by resources in kind, controlled by landlords and dispersed in the countryside, the latter by reliance on compacts with capitalists, with monetized resources concentrated in cities, until a hybrid "capitalized coercion mode" that integrated capitalists and sources of capital into state structures emerged as the most competitive format.²⁰⁶ This sequence coincided with fiscal transformations, from tribute to rent to taxes on flows to taxes on stocks to taxes on income, correlated with growing levels of surveillance and monetization. This trajectory of change corresponds to the fiscal development model proposed by Richard Bonney and Mark Ormrod.²⁰⁷ Large standing armies required bulky bureaucracies, whereas greater wealth reduced the size of the fiscal apparatus: "Thus, the sheer size of the (p. 37) government varied directly with the effort devoted to extraction, state making, protection, and, especially, war making but inversely with the commercialization of the economy and the extent of the resource base."²⁰⁸ During the bargaining processes underlying state-building, both states and subjects assumed growing obligations, and

Studying the State

states' investment focus shifted from the four basic activities of state making, warmaking, protection, and extraction to adjudication, distribution, and production.²⁰⁹

This model, summarized here only in the barest outlines, has been much debated and refined. Hendrik Spruyt modifies Tilly's emphasis on war by explaining institutional variation by economic change rather than by different responses to functional prerequisites of warmaking, and by seeking to explain the ability to make war by institutional analysis, thereby complementing Tilly's theory by specifying the bargains inherent in the state making process. Thomas Ertman offers another elaboration by seeking to explain the full range of outcome in types of state infrastructure through a combination of the presence of representative institutions and the timing of sustained geopolitical competition. For Brian Downing, the degree of military pressure determined the survival of medieval constitutionalism.²¹⁰ Even so, warmaking, as a "constant state function," occupies a central position in all these theories. This is particularly true of Bruce Porter's argument about the pervasive influence of war on overall state formation. He defines war "in the broadest possible sense" to include the preparations for and the consequences of war. The consequences of war varied greatly, including formative effects (such as territorial coalescence, rallying, centralization, bureaucratization, government growth, fiscal extraction, the "ratchet effect" of lasting war-driven state revenue and spending increases, and opportunities for leadership), disintegrative effects (such as state destruction, revolution, diminished capacity, or fiscal collapse), and reformative effects (such as integration, socialization, social leveling, and social reform). William Thompson and Karen Rasler find evidence of a direct relationship between war and state making, as a function of increasing army size, rather than an indirect connection mediated by changes in tactics and weapons technology.²¹¹

Interstate conflict and class conflict are the main elements of this theory: it combines classes eager to exploit with rulers eager to coerce, regarding war as just as essential to a society's survival as its economic reproduction of life. State formation is seen as driven by class exploitation and state coercion, with rulers serving not merely as class agents but as autonomous actors who bargain with class groups to extract the means of war. War is perceived as the state's *raison d'être*, and state activity is always understood primarily in relation to its warmaking function: "extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organizational structures of states."²¹² This approach is a classic instantiation of conflict theory as discussed in the second section, but expands it insofar as conflict does not merely account for the creation of the state but also for its ongoing development, in this case over an entire millennium.

We must ask whether this model can also be applied to ancient states or remains specific to more recent European history.²¹³ The contrast between the formation (p. 38) of ever more cohesive states in Europe and more cyclical development in other periods and regions, especially in antiquity, is undeniably striking. This, however, need not mean that ancient states did not experience similar processes: Tilly notes that while some elements of his model, such as the sharp contrast between coercion- and capital-intensive systems, distinguish Europe from other regions, the tendency for war to build up state structure

Studying the State

applies more generally.²¹⁴ Finer concurs, and Stanislaw Andreski maintains that military organization was generally a critical determinant of political organization, affecting the size and cohesion of states, their administrative hierarchy, and the extent of governmental regulation. Unfortunately, although he defines six ideal type combinations of military participation rates, cohesion, and subordination across world history, he fails to develop a general model that could explain observed outcomes.²¹⁵ Among historians of antiquity, Armin and Peter Eich may be the only ones to apply Tilly's concepts explicitly, notably to the Roman state, which provides a good fit for his emphasis on warmaking and state-class interaction.²¹⁶ However, Hall points out that endemic warfare need not trigger dynamic social change, citing the experience of Islamic and Indic polities.²¹⁷ As Victoria Hui argues, even in environments where dynamic state formation did occur in response to military pressure, outcomes could be very different from what happened in Europe: the transition from the Chinese Warring States to periodic universal empire is a telling example.²¹⁸ Despite any such differences in outcome, however, a model of state formation driven by interstate and class conflict holds promise for the study of any historical period, even as we must avoid the transfer of specifically European features to other environments. This is a fertile ground for research that has barely been touched.

As noted above, empires commonly failed, and even more durable states suffered periodic breakdowns. This pervasive tendency makes the search for generalizable explanations all the more important. Competing perspectives stress different factors: intrinsic problems of managing complexity, the impact of demographic change, competition between the politically and economically dominant classes, or some combination thereof. In her work on revolution, Theda Skocpol views the state as an economic entity that forms its own class interest, creating a state administrative class that favors the expansion of the state's extractive capacity. The landed elite, who wish to avoid extraction, are their principal opponents, and insofar as these two groups are intertwined, conflict may break out: this leads to breakdown at the top, opening up opportunities for revolutionary forces from below. Military strain is seen as the prime source of stress: if the state fails to control elites who resist measures that are necessary to sustain war efforts, the state may fail.²¹⁹ Goldstone privileges population pressure as the prime mover: in his "demographic-structural" model, population growth together with low adaptability of state and economic structures fosters disintegrative tendencies. Yet external stress also matters to his model since the balance between state obligations and resources is the key variable.²²⁰

Turchin and Sergey Nefedov have developed Goldstone's theory into a more comprehensive theory of "secular cycles." They seek to endogenize demographic change, which in Goldstone's version serves as an exogenous force acting on economic, political, and social structures. In their synthetic theory, demography is endogenized in what is essentially a neo-Malthusian model according to which population growth depresses marginal returns on further inputs, cheapening labor and widening inequality. At the same time, state cohesion is thought to diminish as frontiers recede. These processes coincide with crisis within the elite as elite overreproduction diminishes per capita revenues. This problem intensifies state-elite competition for rents and leads to tax

Studying the State

growth and conflict within elites; the ensuing destabilization depresses population size due to violence, migration, and poverty and lowers productive capacity, while elites shrink more than the commoner population because of greater exposure to violence. All this relaxes resource constraints and allows a new growth cycle to start, especially if the crisis spurs (Boserupian) technological progress.²²¹

This theory incorporates elements of Skopcol's and Goldstone's theories but develops them further by positing homeostatic mechanisms of state formation. This creates two problems. One is that comprehensive endogenization may be theoretically elegant but not necessarily consistent with reality: Turchin and Nefedov concede that exogenous factors, from geopolitical conditions to disease, climate, and social evolution (which affects carrying capacity), may also be relevant.²²² Yet it is difficult to ascertain whether these factors are merely auxiliary or more important than endogenous developments. For instance, pathogen mutation or climate change may affect carrying capacity even in the absence of any systemic crisis.²²³ (A related issue is whether in a fully endogenized model, in the absence of epidemics or climate change, the destabilizing effects of population pressure and elite overreproduction would be sufficient to precipitate demographic contraction on the scale required to launch a new growth cycle.) The other problem is that we cannot be sure that massive dislocations are necessary to explain state collapse. While there can be little doubt that the developments envisaged by Turchin and Nefedov would be sufficient to destabilize states, more parsimonious theories that do not require comprehensive socioeconomic crisis may also be able to account for instances of state breakdown, thereby limiting the applicability of demographic-structural approaches.

An example of more narrowly focused theorizing is provided by Joseph Tainter's theory of state collapse caused by diminishing marginal returns on investment in sociopolitical complexity as a problem-solving response. He holds that investment in state structures beyond a certain level may raise per capita costs while reducing per capita benefits. This investment may take the form of expansions of bureaucracy or the military, causing an overallocation of productive resources to complexity and/or rendering complexity less attractive and separation more so.²²⁴ In this model, it is the state itself that generates the conditions for its own decline, although exogenous factors—such as geopolitical conditions and environmental change—mediate actual outcomes. Motyl develops a revised version of this model that focuses specifically on the decay and collapse of imperial formations. Expansion of the state apparatus creates demand for information about the (p. 40) information-gathering apparatus, which increases complexity and costs unless the apparatus becomes correspondingly more efficient. This trend tends to overload the center, encouraging the appearance of subcenters that are more efficient in dealing with local challenges but erode the power monopoly of the imperial center and create harmony between peripheries, thereby undermining the quintessentially “spoke-like” imperial power structure. In this model, larger empires should be more vulnerable to this because they have more peripheries. Motyl distinguishes between decay and attrition, the former perceived as endogenous and caused by the processes just

Studying the State

described, the latter exogenous and caused by outside challenges to a destabilizing system.²²⁵

Randall Collins presents another parsimonious theory that stresses endogenous factors. We have already noted his claim that “marcher states” enjoyed an advantage in empire building, a common assumption that may nevertheless not be generally applicable. In any case, any initial positional advantage was lost as states successfully expanded. At the same time, expansion increased logistical loads and led to overextension, factors which by themselves increased the likelihood of failure in the face of external challenges. Moreover, these growing burdens increased the risk of alienating elites unless the economy grew fast enough to keep pace with state demands.²²⁶ Rebecca Li advocates a theoretical synthesis of demographic and geopolitical models. She regards state power as the critical variable: weak states are less likely to manage population growth or worsening geopolitical conditions. Motyl makes a similar point about strong systems being able to withstand severe shocks, and vice versa.²²⁷ This raises the question of how to distinguish state power from the unsuccessful investment in state capabilities that is central to cost-of-complexity models.

Existing theories variously privilege state size, state structure, and resource stress; actual outcomes are always seen as mediated by exogenous factors such as competitors and environmental factors. All of them envision a mismatch between available and required resources—triggered by population growth, or by investment in complexity, or by growing logistical loads—as the ultimate cause (or source of decay, in Motyl’s terminology). Consequent intergroup conflict—between state rulers and elites, within elites, and between commoners and rulers and elites—and increased vulnerability serve as proximate causes (or sources of attrition). Yet despite some measure of convergence, these positions retain significant differences in emphasis. We must conclude that no single general theory of state breakdown has so far been developed. Moreover, the empirical base of pertinent scholarship is slender. As mentioned above, a recent survey counts sixty-four empires before 1800 that at one time covered at least one million square kilometers of territory. Almost all of them have completely disappeared by now and even those few that were reconstituted (China and Russia) have suffered episodic breakdowns. No systematic attempt has been made to analyze the circumstances of the endings even of those very large polities, let alone of the even larger number of all agrarian states in world history. Recent case studies that are meant to instantiate ambitious theoretical models seriously engage only with a handful of specimens.²²⁸ It is possible that (p. 41) different models are required for polities that were embedded in state systems and for those that were universal empires facing differently organized peripheries,²²⁹ or for those cases in which crises of the state coincided with environmental change and for those in which they did not. Only comprehensive comparative analysis can elucidate the underlying mechanisms.

References

Studying the State

Abu-Lughod, J. L. 1989. *Before European hegemony: The world system A.D. 1250–1350*. New York.

Adams, J. 2005. *The familial state: Ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe*. Ithaca, NY. (p. 48)

Alcock, S. E., T. D. D'Altroy, K. D. Morrison, and C. M. Sinopoli, eds. 2001. *Empires: Perspectives from archaeology and history*. New York.

Alesina, A., and E. Spolaore. 2005. *The size of nations*. Cambridge, MA.

Algaze, G. 1993. *The Uruk world system: The dynamics of expansion of early Mesopotamian civilization*. Chicago.

Amin, S. 1976. *Unequal development: An essay on the social formations of peripheral capitalism*. New York.

———. 1991. "The ancient world systems versus the modern capitalist world system." *Review 14*: 349–385.

Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Rev. ed. London.

Anderson, G. 2009. "The personality of the Greek state." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 129: 1–22.

Andreski, S. 1968. *Military organization and society*. 2nd ed. Berkeley.

Artzrouni, M., and J. Komlos. 1996. "The formation of the European state system: A spatial 'predatory' model." *Historical Methods* 29: 126–134.

Bandy, M. S. 2004. "Fissioning, scalar stress, and social evolution in early village societies." *American Anthropologist* 106: 322–333.

Bang, P. F. 2003. "Rome and the comparative study of tributary empires." *Medieval History Journal* 6: 189–216.

———. 2007. "Trade and empire—in search of organizing concepts for the Roman economy." *Past and Present* 195: 3–54.

———. 2008. *The Roman bazaar: A comparative study of trade and markets in a tributary empire*. Cambridge.

Bang, P. F., and C. Bayly. 2003. "Introduction: Comparing pre-modern empires." *Medieval History Journal* 6: 169–187.

———, eds. 2011. *Tributary empires in global history*. Basingstoke.

Studying the State

Bang, P. F., C. Bayly, and W. Scheidel, eds. Forthcoming. *The Oxford world history of empire*. New York.

Barbera, H. 1998. *The military factor in social change*. 2 vols. New Brunswick, NJ.

Beaujard, P. 2005. "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African world-systems before the sixteenth century." *Journal of World History* 16: 411–465.

Blanton, R., and L. Fargher. 2008. *Collective action in the formation of pre-modern states*. New York.

Blanton, R., S. A. Kowalewski, and G. Feinman. 1992. "The Mesoamerican world-system." *Review* 15: 418–426.

Blanton, R. E. 1998. "Beyond centralization: Steps toward a theory of egalitarian behavior in archaic states." In Feinman and Marcus, eds. 1998: 135–172.

Bonney, R., ed. 1999. *The rise of the fiscal state in Europe, c. 1200–1815*. Oxford.

Bonney, R., and W. M. Ormrod. 1999. "Crises, revolutions and self-sustained growth: Towards a conceptual model of change in fiscal history." In W. M. Ormrod, M. Bonney, and R. Bonney, eds., *Crises, revolutions and self-sustained growth: Essays in European fiscal history, 1130–1830*, 1–21. Stamford, CT.

Brumfield, E. M. 1994. "Introduction." In E. M. Brumfiel, ed., *The economic anthropology of the state*, 1–16. Lanham, MD.

Bronson, B. 1988. "The role of barbarians in the fall of states." In N. Yoffee and G. L. Cowgill, eds., *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*, 196–218. Tucson, AZ.

Bueno de Mesquita, B., A. Smith, R. M. Silverson, and J. D. Morrow. 2003. *The logic of political survival*. Cambridge, MA. (p. 49)

Burbank, J., and F. Cooper. 2010. *Empires in world history: Geographies of power, politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ.

Burke, P. 1986. "City-States." In J. A. Hall, ed., *States in history*, 137–153. Oxford.

Buzan, B., and R. Little. 2000. *International systems in world history: Remaking the study of international relations*. Oxford.

Carneiro, R. L. 1970. "A theory of the origin of the state." *Science* 169: 733–738.

———. 1978. "Political expansion as an expression of the principle of competitive exclusion." In R. Cohen and E. R. Service, eds., *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*, 205–223. Philadelphia.

———. 1981. "The chiefdom: Precursor of the state." In G. D. Jones and R. R. Kautz, eds., *The transition to statehood in the New World*, 37–79. New York.

Studying the State

———. 1988. "The circumscription theory: Challenge and response." *American Behavioral Scientist* 31: 497–511.

Cederman, L. E. 1997. *Emergent actors in world politics: How states and nations develop and dissolve*. Princeton, NJ.

Charlton, T. H., and D. L. Nichols. 1997. "The city-state concept: Development and applications." In D. L. Nichols and T. H. Charlton, eds., *The archaeology of city-states*, 1–14. Washington, DC.

Chase-Dunn, C. 1988. "Comparing world systems: Toward a theory of semiperipheral development." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 19: 29–66.

Chase-Dunn, C., and E. N. Anderson, eds. 2005. *The historical evolution of world-systems*. New York.

Chase-Dunn, C., and T. D. Hall, eds. 1991. *Core/periphery relations in precapitalist worlds*. Boulder, CO.

———. 1997. *Rise and demise: Comparing world-systems*. Boulder, CO.

Chase-Dunn, C., T. D. Hall, and P. Turchin. 2007. "World-systems in the biogeosphere: Urbanization, state formation and climate change since the Iron Age." In A. Hornberg and C. Crumley, eds., *The world system and the earth system: Global socioenvironmental change and sustainability since the Neolithic*, 132–148. Walnut Creek, CA.

Chase-Dunn, C., and E. S. Manning. 2002. "City systems and world systems: Four millennia of city growth and decline." *Cross-Cultural Research* 36: 370–398.

Chase-Dunn, C., S. Manning, and T. D. Hall. 2000. "Rise and fall: East-West synchrony and Indic exceptionalism examined." *Social Science History* 24: 727–754.

Christian, D. 2004. *Maps of time: An introduction to Big History*. Berkeley, CA.

Chua, A. 2007. *Day of empire: How hyperpowers rise to global dominance—and why they fall*. New York.

Cioffi-Revilla, C. 1996. "Origins and evolution of war and politics." *International Studies Quarterly* 40: 1–22.

Claessen, H. J. M. 1978. "The early state: A structural approach." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The early state*, 533–596. The Hague.

Claessen, H. J. M., and Oosten, J. G. 1996. "Discussion and considerations." In Claessen and Oosten, eds. 1996: 359–405.

———, eds. 1996. *Ideology and the formation of early states*. Leiden.

Studying the State

Claessen, H. J. M., and Skalník, P. 1978a. "The early state: Theories and hypotheses." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The early state*, 3-30. The Hague.

———. 1978b. "Limits: Beginning and end of the early state." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The early state*, 1978: 619-636. The Hague. (p. 50)

———. 1978c. "The early state: Models and reality." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The early state*, 637-650. The Hague.

———, eds. 1978. *The early state*. The Hague.

———, eds. 1981. *The study of the state*. The Hague.

Claessen, H. J. M., and van de Velde, P., eds. 1987. *Early state dynamics*. Leiden.

———, eds. 1991. *Early state economics*. New Brunswick, NJ.

Cohen, J. 1995. *How many people can the earth support?* New York.

Cohen, R. 1978a. "Introduction." In R. Cohen and E. R. Service, eds., *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*, 1-20. Philadelphia.

———. 1978b. "State origins: A reappraisal." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The early state*, 31-75. The Hague.

Cohen, R., and E. R. Service, eds. 1978. *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*. Philadelphia.

Collins, R. 1978. "Some principles of long-term social change: The territorial power of states." In L. F. Kriesberg, ed., *Research in social movements, conflicts, and change*, 1:1-34. Greenwich, CT.

———. 1986. *Weberian sociological theory*. Cambridge.

———. 1992. "The geopolitical and economic world systems of kinship-based and agrarian-coercive societies." *Review* 15: 373-388.

———. 1995. "Prediction in macrosociology: The case of the Soviet collapse." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 1552-1593.

Cooper, F. 2004. "Empire multiplied." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46: 247-272.

Cosgel, M. M., and T. J. Miceli. 2009. "Tax collection in history." *Public Finance Review* 37: 399-420.

Crone, P. 1986. "The tribe and the state." In J. A. Hall, ed., *States in history*, 48-77. Oxford.

Studying the State

- . 2003. *Pre-industrial societies: Anatomy of the pre-modern world*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Crumley, C. L. 1987. "A dialectical critique of hierarchy." In C. W. Gailey and T. C. Patterson, eds., *Power relations and state formation*, 155–169. Washington, DC.
- Davies, M. I. J. 2009. "Wittfogel's dilemma: Heterarchy and ethnographic approaches to irrigation management in Eastern Africa and Mesopotamia." *World Archaeology* 41: 16–35.
- Denemark, R. A., J. Friedman, B. Gills, and G. Modelski, eds. 2000. *World system history: The social science of long-term change*. London.
- Diamond, J. 1999. *Guns, germs, and steel: The fates of human societies*. New York.
- Downing, B. M. 1992. *The military revolution and political change: Origins of democracy and autocracy in early modern Europe*. Princeton, NJ.
- Doyle, M. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca, NY.
- Earle, T. K. 1987. "Chieftdoms in archaeological and ethnohistorical perspective." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16: 279–308.
- Eckstein, A. M. 2006. *Mediterranean anarchy, interstate war, and the rise of Rome*. Berkeley, CA.
- Ehrenreich, R. M., C. L. Crumley, and J. E. Levy, eds. 1995. *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*. Washington, DC.
- Eich, A., and P. Eich. 2005. "War and state-building in Roman Republican times." *Scripta Classica Israelica* 24: 1–33. (p. 51)
- Eich, P. 2005. *Zur Metamorphose des politischen Systems in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Die Entstehung einer "personalen Bürokratie" im langen dritten Jahrhundert*. Berlin.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 1993. *The political systems of empires*. Paperback ed. New Brunswick, NJ.
- Engels, F. [1884] 1972. *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. London.
- Ertman, T. 1997. *Birth of the Leviathan: Building states and regimes in medieval and early modern Europe*. Cambridge.
- Evans, P. B., D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, eds. 1985. *Bringing the state back in*. Cambridge.
- Feinman, G. M. 1998. "Scale and social organization: Perspectives on the archaic state." In M. Feinman and J. Marcus, eds., *Archaic states*, 95–133. Santa Fe, NM.
- Feinmann, M., and J. Marcus, eds. 1998. *Archaic states*. Santa Fe, NM.

Studying the State

Ferguson, Y. H., and R. W. Mansbach. 1999. "Global politics at the turn of the millennium: Changing bases of 'us' and 'them.'" *International Studies Review* 1: 77–107.

Finer, S. E. 1975. "State- and nation-building in Europe: The role of the military." In C. Tilly, ed., *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, 84–163. Princeton, NJ.

———. 1997. *The history of government from the earliest times, I: Ancient monarchies and empires*. Oxford.

Flannery, K. V. 1972. "The cultural evolution of civilizations." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 3: 399–426.

Frank, A. G., and B. K. Gills, eds. 1993. *The world system: Five hundred years or five thousand?* London.

———. 2000. "The five thousand year world system in theory and practice." In Denmark et al., eds., *World system history: The social science of long-term change*, 3–23. London.

Frank, A. G., and W. R. Thompson. 2005. "Afro-Eurasian Bronze Age economic expansion and contraction revisited." *Journal of World History* 16: 115–172.

———. 2006. "Early Iron Age economic expansion and contraction revisited." In B. K. Gills and W. R. Thompson, eds., *Globalization and global history*, 139–162. London.

Fried, M. H. 1967. *The evolution of political society: An essay in political anthropology*. New York.

———. 1978. "The state, the chicken, and the egg: What came first?" In R. Cohen and E. R. Service, eds., *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*, 35–47. Philadelphia.

Gailey, C. W., and T. C. Patterson. 1987. "Power relations and state formation." In T. C. Patterson and C. W. Gailey, eds., *Power relations and state formation*, 1–26. Washington, DC.

Galtung, J. 1971. "A structural theory of imperialism." *Journal of Peace Research* 13: 81–94.

Gat, A. 2002. "Why city-states existed? Riddles and clues of urbanisation and fortifications." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of six city-state cultures: An investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, 125–139. Copenhagen.

———. 2006. *War in human civilization*. Oxford.

Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca, NY.

Gerth, H., and C. W. Mills, eds. 1946. *From Max Weber*. New York. (p. 52)

Studying the State

Giddens, A. 1987. *The nation-state and violence: Volume two of a contemporary critique of historical materialism*. Berkeley, CA.

———. 1995. *A contemporary critique of historical materialism*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke, UK.

Gilbert, F., ed. 1975. *The historical essays of Otto Hintze*. New York.

Goldstone, J. A., 1991a. *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world*. Berkeley, CA.

———. 1991b. "States making wars making states making wars ..." *Contemporary Sociology* 20: 176–178.

Goldstone, J. A., and J. F. Haldon. 2009. "Ancient states, empires, and exploitation." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires* (New York), 3–29.

Gorski, P. S. 2001. "Beyond Marx and Hintze? Third-wave theories of early modern state formation." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43: 851–861.

Griffeth, R., and C. G. Thomas, eds. 1981. *The city-state in five cultures*. Santa Barbara, CA.

Haldon, J. 1993. *The state and the tributary mode of production*. London.

Hall, J. A. 1986a. *Powers and liberties: The causes and consequences of the rise of the West*. Berkeley, CA.

———. 1986b. "Introduction." In J. A. Hall, ed., *States in history*, 1–21. Oxford.

———. 1986c. "War and the rise of the West." In M. Shaw and C. Creighton, eds., *The Sociology of War and Peace*, 37–53. London.

———, ed. 1986. *States in history*. Oxford.

Hall, J. A., and R. Schroeder, eds. 2006. *An anatomy of power: The social theory of Michael Mann*. Cambridge.

Hansen, M. H., ed. 2000. *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures: An investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*. Copenhagen.

———. 2000a. "Introduction: The concepts of city-state and city-state culture." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures: An investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, 11–34. Copenhagen.

———. 2000b. "Conclusion: The impact of city-state cultures on world history." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures: An investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, 597–623. Copenhagen.

———, ed. 2002. *A comparative study of six city-state cultures: An investigation conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*. Copenhagen.

Studying the State

- Harris, M. 1977. *Cannibals and kings: The origins of cultures*. New York.
- Howe, S. 2002. *Empire: A very short introduction*. Oxford.
- Hui, V. Tin-bor. 2005. *War and state formation in ancient China and early modern Europe*. Cambridge.
- Hurlet, F., ed. 2008. *Les empires: Antiquitéet MoyenÂge. Analyse comparée*. Rennes.
- Johnson, A. W., and T. Earle. 2000. *The evolution of human societies: From foraging group to agrarian state*. 2nd ed. Stanford, CA.
- Johnson, G. A. 1982. "Organizational structure and scalar stress." In C. Renfrew, M. J. Rowlands, and B. A. Seagraves, eds. *Theory and explanation in archaeology*, 389-421. New York.
- Kasza, G. J. 1996. "War and comparative politics." *Comparative Politics* 29: 355-373.
- Kaufman, H. 1988. "The collapse of ancient states and civilizations as an organizational problem." In N. Yoffee and G. L. Cowgill, eds., *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*, 219-235. Tucson, AZ. (p. 53)
- Kaufman, S. J. 1997. "The fragmentation and consolidation of international systems." *International Organization* 51: 173-208.
- Kaufman, S. J., R. Little, and W. C. Wohlforth, eds. 2007. *The balance of power in world history*. Basingstoke, UK.
- Kautsky, J. H. 1982. *The politics of aristocratic empires*. New Brunswick, NJ.
- Khazanov, A. M. 1994. *Nomads and the outside world*. 2nd ed. Madison, WI.
- Kiser, E. 1994. "Markets and hierarchies in early modern tax systems: A principal-agent analysis." *Politics and Society* 22: 284-315.
- Krader, L. 1968. *Formation of the state*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Kradin, N. N. 2002. "Nomadism, evolution and world-systems: Pastoral societies in theories of historical development." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 8: 368-388.
- Kristiansen, K. 1993. "The emergence of the European world system in the Bronze Age: Divergence, convergence, and social evolution during the first and second millennium B.C. in Europe." In K. Kristiansen and J. Jensen, eds., *Europe in the first millennium*, 7-30. Sheffield, UK.
- La Done, D. 2000. "Rise, fall, and semiperipheral development in the Andean world-system." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 6: 68-99.

Studying the State

Lane, F. C. 1979. *Profits from power: Readings in protection rent and violence-controlling enterprises*. Albany, NY.

Lee, R. D. 1986a. "Malthus and Boserup: A dynamic synthesis." In D. a. Coleman and R. Schofield, eds., *The state of population theory: Forward from Malthus*, 96–130. Oxford.

———. 1986b. "Population homeostasis and English demographic history." In R. I. Rotberg and T. K. Rabb, eds., *Population and economy: Population and economy from the traditional to the modern world*, 75–100. Cambridge.

Leitner, U. 2011. *Imperium: Geschichte und Theorie eines politischen Systems*. Frankfurt.

Lenski, G. E. 1984. *Power and privilege: A theory of social stratification*. Paperback ed. Chapel Hill, NC.

Levi, M. 1988. *Of rule and revenue*. Berkeley, CA.

Lewis, H. S. 1981. "Warfare and the origin of the state: Another formulation." In H. J. M. Claessen and P. Skalník, eds., *The study of the state*, 201–221. The Hague.

Li, R. S. K. 2002. "Alternative routes to state breakdown: Toward an integrated model of territorial disintegration." *Sociological Theory* 20: 1–23.

Lieberman, V. 2003. *Strange parallels: Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800–1830, I: Integration on the mainland*. Cambridge.

Lieven, D. 2000. *Empire: The Russian empire and its rivals*. New Haven, CT.

Maisels, C. K. 1990. *The emergence of civilization: From hunting and gathering to agriculture, cities, and the state in the Near East*. London.

Mann, M. 1977. "States, ancient and modern." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 18: 262–298.

———. 1986a. *The sources of social power, I: A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge.

———. 1986b. "The autonomous power of the state: Its origins, mechanisms and results." In J. A. Hall, ed., *States in history*, 109–136. Oxford.

———. 1993. *The sources of social power, II: The rise of classes and nation-states*. Cambridge.

Marcus, J. 1998. "The peaks and valleys of ancient states: An extension of the dynamic model." In M. Feinman and J. Marcus, eds., *Archaic states*, 59–94. Santa Fe, NM. (p. 54)

McEvedy, C., and R. Jones. 1978. *Atlas of world population history*. New York.

Studying the State

- McNeill, W. H. 1982. *The pursuit of power: Technology, armed force, and society since A.D. 1000*. Chicago.
- Molho, A., K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen. 1991. *City states in classical antiquity and medieval Italy*. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Morris, I. 1991. "The early polis as city and state." In J. Rich and A. Wallace-Hadrill, eds., *City and country in the ancient world*, 25–57. London.
- . 1997. "An archaeology of inequalities? The Greek city-states." In D. L. Nichols and T. H. Charlton, eds., *The archaeology of city-states*, 91–105. Washington, DC.
- Morris, I., and W. Scheidel, eds. 2009. *The dynamics of ancient empires*. New York.
- Morrison, K. D. 2001. "Sources, approaches, definitions." In S. E. Alcock et al., eds., *Empires: Perspectives from archaeology and history*, 1–9. New York.
- Motyl, A. J. 2001. *Imperial ends: The decay, collapse, and revival of empires*. New York.
- Münkler, H. 2007. *Empires: The logic of world domination from ancient Rome to the United States*. Cambridge.
- Nettl, J. P. 1968. "The state as a conceptual variable." *World Politics* 20: 559–592.
- Nichols, D. L., and T. H. Charlton, eds. 1997. *The archaeology of city-states*. Washington, DC.
- North, D. C., and R. P. Thomas. 1973. *The rise of the Western world: A new economic history*. Cambridge.
- North, D. C., J. J. Wallis, and B. R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and social orders: A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*. New York.
- Olsson, O., and D. Hibbs. 2005. "Biogeography and long-run development." *European Economic Review* 49: 909–938.
- Parker, G. 2004. *Sovereign city: The city-state through history*. London.
- Pauketat, T. R. 2007. *Chieftdoms and other archaeological delusions*. Lanham, MD.
- Peregrine, P. N., C. R. Ember, and M. Ember. 2007. "Modeling state origins using cross-cultural data." *Cross-Cultural Research* 41: 75–86.
- Peregrine, P. N., and G. M. Feinman, eds. 1996. *Pre-Columbian world-systems*. Madison, WI.
- Poggi, G. 1990. *The state: Its nature, development and prospects*. Stanford, CA.

Studying the State

Porter, B. D. 1994. *War and the rise of the state: The military foundations of modern politics*. New York.

Przeworski, A. 2003. *States and markets: A primer in political economy*. Cambridge.

Putterman, L. 2008. "Agriculture, diffusion and development: Ripple effects of the Neolithic Revolution." *Economica* 75: 729–748.

Raaflaub, K. 1991. "City-state, territory, and empire in classical antiquity." In A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen, eds., *City states in classical antiquity and medieval Italy*, 565–588. Ann Arbor, MI.

Raaflaub, K., and N. Rosenstein, eds. 1999. *War and society in the ancient and medieval worlds: Asia, Europe, and Mesoamerica*. Cambridge, MA.

Reynolds, S. 2006. "Empires: A problem of comparative history." *Historical Research* 79: 151–165.

Rousseau, J.-J. [1762] 1987. *On the social contract*. Trans. D. A. Cress. Indianapolis.

Rowlands, M., M. Larsen, and K. Kristiansen, eds. 1987. *Centre and periphery in the ancient world*. Cambridge.

Runciman, W. G. 1989. *A treatise on social theory II: Substantive social theory*. Cambridge. (p. 55)

———. 1990. "Doomed to extinction: The polis as an evolutionary dead-end." In O. Murray and S. Price, eds., *The Greek city: From Homer to Alexander*, 347–367. Oxford.

Sanderson, S. K., ed. 1995. *Civilizations and world systems: Studying world-historical change*. Walnut Creek, CA.

———. 1999. *Social transformations: A general theory of historical development*. Exp. ed. Lanham, MD.

———. 2000. "World systems and social change in agrarian societies, 3000 BC to AD 1500." In R. A. Denemark et al., eds., *World system history: The social science of long-term change*, 185–197. London.

Scheidel, W., ed. 2009. *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*. New York.

———. 2009a. "From the 'Great Convergence' to the 'First Great Divergence': Roman and Qin-Han state formation and its aftermath." In W. Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*, 11–23. New York.

———. 2009b. "Sex and empire: A Darwinian perspective." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires*, 255–324. New York.

Studying the State

———. forthcoming. *Explaining empire: Models for ancient history*. New York.

Service, E. R. 1971. *Primitive social organization*. 2nd ed. New York.

———. 1975. *Origins of the state and civilization: The process of cultural evolution*. New York.

———. 1978. "Classical and modern theories of the origins of government." In R. Cohen and E. R. Service, eds., *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*, 21–34. Philadelphia.

Skocpol, T. 1979. *States and social revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge.

Smith, M. E. 2004. "The archaeology of ancient state economies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 73–102.

———. 2006. "How do archaeologists compare early states?" *Reviews in Anthropology* 35: 5–35.

Spruyt, H. 1994. *The sovereign state and its competitors: An analysis of systems change*. Princeton, NJ.

Stein, G. 1999. *Rethinking world-systems: Diasporas, colonies, and interaction in Uruk Mesopotamia*. Tucson, AZ.

Steinmetz, G. 1999. "Introduction: Culture and the state." In G. Steinmetz, ed., *State/culture: State formation after the cultural turn*, 1–49. Ithaca, NY.

———, ed. 1999. *State/culture: State formation after the cultural turn*. Ithaca, NY.

Taagepera, R. 1978a. Size and duration of empires: Systematics of size. *Social Science Research* 7: 108–127.

———. 1978b. Size and duration of empires: Growth-decline curves, 3000 to 600 B.C. *Social Science Research* 7: 180–196.

———. 1979. Size and duration of empires: Growth-decline curves, 600 B.C. to 600 A.D. *Social Science History* 3: 115–138.

Tainter, J. A. 1988. *The collapse of complex societies*. Cambridge.

Tambiah, S. J. 1976. *World conqueror and world renouncer*. Cambridge.

Thompson, W. R., and K. Rasler. 1999. "War, the military revolution(s) controversy, and army expansion: A test of two explanations of influences on European state making." *Comparative Political Studies* 32: 3–31. (p. 56)

Studying the State

- Thomson, J. E. 1994. *Mercenaries, pirates and sovereigns: State-building and extraterritorial violence in early modern Europe*. Princeton, NJ.
- Tilly, C. 1975. "Reflections on the history of European state-making." In C. Tilly, ed., *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, 3–83. Princeton, NJ.
- , ed. 1975. *The formation of national states in Western Europe*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 1985. "War making and state making as organized crime." In P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the state back in*, 169–191. Cambridge.
- . 1992. *Coercion, capital, and European states AD 990–1992*. Cambridge, MA.
- Trigger, B. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations: A comparative study*. Cambridge.
- Turchin, P. 2003. *Historical dynamics: Why states rise and fall*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2006. *War and peace and war: The life cycles of imperial nations*. New York.
- . 2009. "A theory for formation of large empires." *Journal of Global History* 4: 191–217.
- Turchin, P., and S. A. Nefedov. 2009. *Secular cycles*. Princeton, NJ.
- Turner, J. H. 1995. *Macrodynamics: Toward a theory on the organization of human populations*. New Brunswick, NJ.
- . 2003. *Human institutions: A theory of societal evolution*. Lanham, MD.
- . 1989. *Technology and war: From 2000 B.C. to the present*. New York.
- Van Creveld, M. 1999. *The rise and decline of the state*. Cambridge.
- Van der Vliet, E. C. L. 2008. "The early state, the polis and state formation in early Greece." *Social Evolution and History* 7: 197–221.
- Vincent, A. 1987. *Theories of the state*. Oxford.
- Wallerstein, I. 1974. *The modern world-system, I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. New York.
- Watson, A. 1992. *The evolution of international society: A comparative historical analysis*. London.
- Weber, M. 1978. *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*. Berkeley, CA.
- . 1980. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. 5th ed. Tübingen.

Studying the State

- Webster, D. 1975. "Warfare and the evolution of the state: A reconsideration." *American Antiquity* 40: 464-470.
- Wickham, C. 1994. *Land and power: Studies in Italian and European social history, 400-1200*. London.
- Wilkinson, D. 1987. "Central civilization." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17: 31-59.
- . 1988. "Universal empires: Pathos and engineering." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 18: 22-44.
- . 1991. "Cores, peripheries, and civilizations." In C. Chase-Dunn and T. D. Hall, eds., *Core/periphery relations in precapitalist worlds*, 113-166. Boulder, CO.
- Wittfogel, K. 1957. *Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power*. New Haven, CT.
- Wood, E. M. 2003. *Empire of capital*. London.
- Wood, J. W. 1998. "A theory of preindustrial population dynamics." *Current Anthropology* 39: 99-135.
- Woolf, G. 1990. "World-systems analysis and the Roman empire." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3: 44-58.
- Wright, H. T. 1977. "Recent research on the origin of the state." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6: 379-397. (p. 57)
- . 1978. "Toward an explanation of the origin of the state." In R. Cohen and E. R. Service, eds., *Origins of the state: The anthropology of political evolution*, 49-68. Philadelphia.
- Yoffee, N. 2005. *Myths of the archaic state: Evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations*. Cambridge.
- Yoffee, N., and Cowgill, G. L., eds. 1988. *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*. Tucson, AZ. (p. 58)

Notes:

- (1.) Translated by the author from Weber 1980, 29. The conventionally quoted English translation in Weber 1978, 55 is imprecise.
- (2.) Sanderson 1999, 56; Tilly 1992, 1. Cf. Adams 2005, 13.
- (3.) According to Weber 1980, 30 = 1978, 56 and 1980, 822, only the *modern* state may successfully claim a monopoly on legitimate violence per se.

Studying the State

- (4.) Mann 1986a, 37. Territoriality is a central feature of his definition of the state; see below, in the section on Properties.
- (5.) Haldon 1993, 32–33; Hansen 2000a, 13; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 6. Tilly 1975, 70; Morris 1991, 40–41.
- (6.) Carneiro 1970, 733; Cohen 1978, 69. For micro-states, see below, in the penultimate section.
- (7.) Claessen and Skalník 1978c, 640. For their concept of the “early state,” see below, in the third and fourth sections.
- (8.) For the latter, see below, in the following section.
- (9.) Fried 1967, 229; Brumfield 1994, 1; Wright 1978, 56.
- (10.) Finer 1997, 2–3.
- (11.) Poggi 1990, 23, 25.
- (12.) Van Creveld 1999, 1. Cf. also Vincent 1987, 11–13, questioning the “modern” state-ness of the Greek *polis*.
- (13.) Cf. Hansen 2000a, 12–14.
- (14.) Thus also Cederman 1997, 17.
- (15.) Giddens 1987, 121.
- (16.) Weber 1978, 56.
- (17.) Anderson 1991, 6–7.
- (18.) Gellner 1983, 54.
- (19.) Gellner 1983, 54. For state versus community and the particular features of the micro- (and often city-) state, see below, in the sections on Properties and City-States.
- (20.) Steinmetz 1999, 9.
- (21.) Adams 2005, 13; Ferguson and Mansbach 1999, 79. See also Pauketat 2007, 40.
- (22.) Service 1971; Fried 1967.
- (23.) Johnson and Earle 2000.
- (24.) E.g., Johnson and Earle 2000, 5–7.
- (25.) Crone 1986, 48, 51.

Studying the State

(26.) Crone 1986, 58–60, 64, 67–68. The problems of defining tribe-based nomad confederations or “steppe empires” cannot be discussed here: see, e.g., Khazanov 1994, 228–302; Kradin 2002.

(27.) See Feinman 1998, 97 for the lack of a demographic threshold between chiefdom and state.

(28.) Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 22. Pauketat 2007, 16–26 gives a critical overview of the concept.

(29.) Carneiro 1981; Earle 1987; Sanderson 1999, 55.

(30.) Cohen 1978a, 4.

(31.) Stress: Johnson 1982; less likely: Bandy 2004.

(32.) Diamond 1999; Olsson and Hibbs 2005; Putterman 2008; and forthcoming work on the ultimate causes of state formation.

(33.) E.g., Trigger 2003, 395; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 20.

(34.) Peregrine, Ember, and Ember 2007, 78, fig.1.

(35.) For surveys of the debate, see Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 5–17; Cohen 1978a, 5–14; Cohen 1978b; Wright 1978, 504; Maisels 1990, 199–220; Sanderson 1999, 68–86.

(36.) Thus Cohen 1978, 5; Maisels 1990, 203; Johnson and Earle 2000, 305.

(37.) E.g., Flannery 1972; Service 1975; Wright 1978.

(38.) Wittfogel 1957. Davies 2009, 17–18 reviews critiques.

(39.) Engels [1884] 1972, 231.

(40.) For discussion of Marxist theory, see Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 6–9; Gailey and Patterson 1987, 6–10; Haldon 1993, 19–69; Sanderson 1999, 72–74. For state-society and state-elite relations, see below, in the section on Properties.

(41.) Cohen 1978a, 7.

(42.) Service 1978, 31–32, with Fried 1978, and cf. now Peregrine, Ember, and Ember 2007, 78, fig.1.

(43.) E.g., Webster 1975; Lewis 1981; Tilly 1985.

(44.) Carneiro 1970 (quote: 734), 1978, 1988. See also Harris 1977, 99–123.

(45.) Claessen and Skalník 1978b, 625. Cf. Cioffi-Revilla 1996 for a demonstration that war (alongside states) arose several times as a pristine social invention.

Studying the State

- (46.) Trigger 2003, 398; Lewis 1981, 211.
- (47.) Cf. Scheidel 2009b.
- (48.) Sanderson 1999, 81.
- (49.) E.g., Johnson and Earle 2000, 305.
- (50.) Christian 2004, 249–252.
- (51.) Rousseau [1762] 1987, 17.
- (52.) Christian 2004, 264–281.
- (53.) Claessen and Skalník 1978b, 628–629.
- (54.) Feinman 1998, 108–109 (2,500 members); but cf. Claessen 1978, 586 for a minimum of 5,000.
- (55.) Cohen 1978b, 70; Claessen and Skalník 1978b, 624; and cf. Cederman 1997, 19–29.
- (56.) Trigger 2003, 273–275, 395. See below, in the section on Properties.
- (57.) Cohen 1978b, 70.
- (58.) Conjectured from McEvedy and Jones 1978; Cohen 1995, 400. For the limited impact of these shells, see below, in the section on Properties.
- (59.) Weber in Gerth and Mills 1946, 81; see Weber 1978, 1028–1031 for this basic difference.
- (60.) Kautsky 1982, 132–143; Giddens 1987, 35, 62. Cf. Bang 2003 and Eich 2005 for the concept of “patrimonial bureaucracy.” See also Gellner 1983, 14–16 for overlapping typologies of the “warrior-and-scribe ruling class” of agrarian states.
- (61.) Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 22–23. For a review of the concept thirty years after see the special issue of *Social Evolution and History* 7.1 (2008).
- (62.) Claessen and Skalník 1978b, 633.
- (63.) Trigger 2003, 266–267; cf. Smith 2006
- (64.) Gellner 1983, 13; Giddens 1987, 35.
- (65.) Eisenstadt 1993, 10 and *passim*.
- (66.) Giddens 1987, 35; Crone 1986, 68–73.
- (67.) Finer 1997, 6–7.
- (68.) Hansen 2000a, 16.

Studying the State

(69.) *Finer 1997, 13.*

(70.) *Kautsky 1982, 21, 25, 28-35.*

(71.) *Smith 2004, 79 table 1.* See also *Claessen and Van de Velde 1991*, on early state economies.

(72.) Instructive surveys include *Lenski 1984, 189-296*; *Giddens 1987, 35-80*; *Sanderson 1999, 96-133*, as well as the work by *Gellner, Crone, and Kautsky* discussed below. Cf. also *Turner 2003, 178-184*. *North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009, 18-21, 30-109* conceive of premodern states as “natural states.”

(73.) *Gellner 1983, 8-18, esp. 9, fig.1* (graphic depiction), *13-18* (on the state). See also *Hall 1986a, 27-144*, on agro-literate polities.

(74.) *Hall 1986a, 29-30*; *Kautsky 1982, 24-25.*

(75.) *Crone 2003, 35-80.* See further *Hall 1986a* on “capstone” government.

(76.) *Crone 2003, 56-57.*

(77.) *Christian 2004, 274.* Cf. above, in the opening section.

(78.) *North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009, 268, 270.*

(79.) *Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 7.*

(80.) *Giddens 1987, 57, 47.* Cf. *North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009, 271*, for whom political development “involves increasing state capacity to support complex and specialized organizations, create impersonality, sustain a perpetually lived state, and control the dispersion and use of violence in society.” Ancient states would have scored low on most or all of these criteria.

(81.) *Mann 1986b, 113-116, 126*; *Giddens 1995, 104.*

(82.) *Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 21-22.*

(83.) *Trigger 2003*, on Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt, Early Dynastic and Ur III Mesopotamia, Iron Age Urartu, Late Shang and Early Western Zhou Northern China, Maya Classical city-states, the Aztec city-states, the Inca, and the Yoruba/Benin city-states. See also the discussion by *Smith 2006.*

(84.) *Trigger 2003, 264-275.* This is a valuable counterpoint to the relativism favored by *Yoffee 2005.*

(85.) *Trigger 2003, 405-406, 638-650.*

(86.) *Claessen and Skalník 1978, 1981*; *Claessen and Van der Velde 1987, 1991*; *Claessen and Oosten 1996.*

Studying the State

(87.) Claessen and Skalník 1978a, 21. Claessen and Skalník 1978c, 637–639 construct a structural and functional model of the early state that is too detailed to summarize here.

(88.) Claessen 1978.

(89.) Kautsky 1982, 30–34. Cf. Wood 2003, who distinguishes between “empires” of private property (such as Rome), office holding (China), commercial empires (including Arabs), and later colonial empires.

(90.) Kautsky 1982, 341–348.

(91.) Tilly 1992, 96; and see already 1985, 181.

(92.) Tilly 1985, 181, 171. See also Li 2002, 5.

(93.) Lane 1979, 25, 27, 53.

(94.) Lane 1979, 53–55; Tilly 1985, 176. For the more recent elimination of non-state providers of violence, cf. Thomson 1994.

(95.) For protection costs in Roman history, see now Eich and Eich 2005, 12; Bang 2007, 39–41, 2008, 232–233.

(96.) Tilly 1985, 177, 169.

(97.) North and Thomas 1973, 6–7.

(98.) Tilly 1992, 97.

(99.) Tilly 1985, 173–174.

(100.) Claessen 1978, 587.

(101.) Giddens 1987, 55–56.

(102.) Kautsky 1982, 344.

(103.) See below. For the dynamics of state formation, see below, in the final section.

(104.) Mann 1986b, 119–122.

(105.) Porter 1994, 9. See above. Giddens 1987, 63 prefers the notion of “class-divided society” (vs. modern “class society”). Lenski 1984, 243–284 identifies several “classes” in agrarian societies.

(106.) Haldon 1993, 1, 3, 33. See also Skocpol 1979, 24–33; Steinmetz 1999, 12–19.

(107.) Haldon 1993, 63–69. On the difference between tax and rent, see below.

(108.) Amin 1976, 15–16.

Studying the State

(109.) The main exceptions would be oligarchies of landowners such as the Roman Republic and strongly feudal systems with very weak central governments. For the importance of ideology for elite integration, see most recently Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 10–15, and more generally Claessen and Oosten 1996.

(110.) Li 2002, 5–6.

(111.) Giddens 1987, 62–63; Lenski 1984, 231. Cf. Adams 2005, 33–34 on the role of familial (marriage) coalitions of officeholders.

(112.) Lenski 1984, 229.

(113.) Eisenstadt 1993, 153–155, 298; Kiser 1994, 292; Cosgel and Miceli 2009, 403.

(114.) Kautsky 1982, 132–143.

(115.) Skocpol 1979, 30. Cf. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003 for the argument that rulers depend on the support of a “winning coalition” that expects benefits.

(116.) Haldon 1993, 67; Wickham 1994, 43–75, with references to the debate; and further Bang 2008, 93–110.

(117.) By contrast, struggle between privatization of tax by agents and revenue use by the state occurred both within the state class (if subordinates were employed for revenue collection) or between classes (if wealthy elites performed this function).

(118.) Haldon 1993, 266; Eisenstadt 1993, 153–155, 365–368.

(119.) Mann 1986a, 148–155, 171; 1986b, 128–130. Cf. also Runciman 1989, 148–171 on modes of distribution of power.

(120.) Mann 1986a, 1–3. On Mann’s IEMP model, see esp. Hall and Schroeder 2006.

(121.) Mann 1986a, 1–33.

(122.) Mann 1986a, 11; Poggi 1990, 4; Haldon 1993, 267.

(123.) Crumley 1987; Ehrenreich, Crumley and Levy 1995 (quote: 3).

(124.) Mann 1986b, 122–125, 134.

(125.) Li 2002, 4 (drawing on Mann 1993), 7; Mann 1986b, 122. On the importance of warmaking for state formation, see below, in the final section.

(126.) Blanton 1998, 171.

(127.) Blanton 1998, 171, 141–148, esp. 145.

(128.) Blanton and Fargher 2008, 112; see also Levi 1988.

Studying the State

(129.) Blanton and Fargher 2008, 134, 168, 204.

(130.) Blanton and Fargher 2008, 252.

(131.) Blanton and Fargher 2008, 260, 277–278, 273. Cf. above, in the section on Origins. They note that if collective action is negatively correlated with exit opportunity, larger polities ought to see more collective action (273–274). Countervailing forces include logistical loads: see below, in the final section.

(132.) An extreme example is provided by the nomadic state—not considered here—where tribal action based on consent can lead to fission or collective action (Crone 1986, 71–72), even though the state primarily provides coordination of warmaking and not much else in terms of public goods.

(133.) For empires, see Kautsky 1982 (but cf. above, in the sections on Categories and Properties); Doyle 1986; Eisenstadt 1993; Lieven 2000 (esp. 3–40); Alcock et al. 2001; Motyl 2001; Bang and Bayly 2003; Wood 2003; Reynolds 2006; Chua 2007; Münkler 2007; Hurlet 2008; Morris and Scheidel 2009 (esp. Goldstone and Haldon 2009); Burbank and Cooper 2010; Bang and Bayly 2011; Leitner 2011; Bang, Bayly, and Scheidel forthcoming. Specifically for more recent empires, cf. Cooper 2004.

(134.) Doyle 1986, 30, 45.

(135.) Finer 1997, 8; Reynolds 2006, 152.

(136.) Howe 2002, 30; Burbank and Cooper 2010, ch.1; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 17–19.

(137.) Motyl 2001, 4.

(138.) Tambiah 1976; Lieberman 2003, 33. Cf. also Watson 1992, 15–16 for the layering of imperial power.

(139.) This shows that a priori reluctance to offer any kind of definition—as in Morrison 2001, 1–6—simply will not do: if we want to study empires, we must have an idea what we are talking about.

(140.) Doyle 1986, 128. See below, in the final section.

(141.) Doyle 1986, 130–135.

(142.) Galtung 1971, 82–83; Motyl 2001, 16–18, 23–24.

(143.) Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 17.

(144.) E.g., Mann 1986a, 130–133.

(145.) Doyle 1986, 22–30, 123–128; Motyl 2001, 35–38.

Studying the State

- (146.) Doyle 1986, 35, 45.
- (147.) Mann 1986a, 145.
- (148.) Eisenstadt 1993.
- (149.) Taagepera 1978a, 1978b, 1979.
- (150.) Taagepera 1978a, 119–120.
- (151.) Alesina and Spolaore 2005, 3–5.
- (152.) Sanderson 1999, 102, referring to unpublished work by Taagepera.
- (153.) Motyl 2001, 7.
- (154.) Wilkinson 1988, 25, fig.2.
- (155.) Doyle 1986, 137; Goldstone and Haldon 2009, 18.
- (156.) On city-states in history, see esp. Griffeth and Thomas 1981; Burke 1986; Molho et al. 1991; Nichols and Charlton 1997; Hansen 2000, 2002; Parker 2004.
- (157.) Hansen 2000a, 16. Others include cantons or small islands.
- (158.) Charlton and Nichols 1997, 1.
- (159.) Hansen 2000, 2002.
- (160.) Hansen 2000a, 19.
- (161.) Cf. Burke 1986, 138; Charlton and Nichols 1997, 3; Hansen 2000b, 597; and cf. the scope of Molho et al. 1991.
- (162.) Hansen 2000b, 599–601 *contra* Feinman and Marcus 1998, 8–9 and Marcus 1998, 92.
- (163.) See above, in the section on Origins.
- (164.) Hansen 2000b, 609–611.
- (165.) Hansen 2000a, 14.
- (166.) Trigger 2003, 266–269. Parker 2004, 15–22 is wrong to claim that the city-states originated only with the Phoenicians and Philistines.
- (167.) Maisels 1990, 12–13.
- (168.) Gat 2002, 136.
- (169.) Marcus 1998, 92.

Studying the State

- (170.) Burke 1986, 152.
- (171.) Hansen 2000a, 16-19.
- (172.) Parker 2004, 227-228.
- (173.) Hansen 2000b, 611-616.
- (174.) Burke 1986, 143.
- (175.) See below, in the final section, for Tilly's concept of the "capital-intensive" state.
- (176.) Burke 1986, 137; see Weber 1978, 1212-1372.
- (177.) Morris 1991, 46-48, esp. 47, fig.7. See also Morris 1997; Van der Vliet 2008; Anderson 2009. Citizen-state, Runciman 1990, 348.
- (178.) Runciman 1990, 349, 357-359, 364-366. For citizen-city-state empires, see Raaflaub 1991; Scheidel forthcoming.
- (179.) Mann 1986a, 130-133; Collins 1986, 187-188; 1995, 1555-1556; Watson 1992, 128.
- (180.) For the concept, see esp. Chase-Dunn 1988; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 78-98.
- (181.) Chase-Dunn 1988, 36-43; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 84-89.
- (182.) Artzrouni and Komlos 1996 (simulation); Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 89 (causes).
- (183.) Turchin 2003, 9-28.
- (184.) Turchin 2003, 29-93, esp. 56-57, 61-62, 84, table 5.1.
- (185.) Scheidel forthcoming; Turchin 2009.
- (186.) Chase-Dunn 1997, 28.
- (187.) Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 52-54.
- (188.) Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 204, 248.
- (189.) Wilkinson 1987, 31-33, esp. 32, fig.1. Cf. Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 149-186.
- (190.) Wallerstein 1974. For premodern "world systems," see Rowlands, Larsen and Kristiansen 1987; Abu-Lughod 1989; Woolf 1990; Blanton, Kowalewski and Feinman 1992; Algaze 1993; Frank and Gills 1993; Kristiansen 1993; Sanderson 1995; Peregrine and Feinman 1996; Stein 1999; Denemark et al. 2000; LaDone 2000; Beaujard 2005; Chase-Dunn and Anderson 2005. On differences from modern world system, see Amin 1991; Collins 1992.

Studying the State

(191.) Chase-Dunn 1997, 36. See Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991, esp. Wilkinson 1991. On semiperipheries, see above.

(192.) Frank and Gills 2000; Frank and Thompson 2005, 2006.

(193.) Sanderson 2000, 186, and see above, in the section on Categories.

(194.) Sanderson 1999, 124.

(195.) *Contra* Chase-Dunn 1988, 46; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 90–93. See below, in this volume, chapters 10, 13, and 14.

(196.) E.g., Chase-Dunn, Manning, and Hall 2000; Chase-Dunn and Manning 2002 (synchronicities). Chase-Dunn, Hall, and Turchin 2007, 148, fig.7 now accept climate change as the ultimate cause of regional parallels. Cf. also Lieberman 2003, 101–112.

(197.) Kaufman 1997, 175–176, 186–200; cf. Wilkinson 1988, 25, fig.2. See also Watson 1992, 24–132; and Buzan and Little 2000, 167–240 on ancient state systems.

(198.) See now the case studies of ancient balance of power scenarios in Kaufman, Little, and Wohlforth 2007, 22–175.

(199.) For a first attempt, see Eich and Eich 2005, 7–15. Cf. Eckstein 2006 for an application of neorealist theory to Greco-Roman history.

(200.) Most generally Finer 1997, 15–23; and Finer 1975 more specifically on Europe.

(201.) See above, in the section on Properties, on Tilly 1985.

(202.) Hintze (originally from 1907) in Gilbert 1975, 181

(203.) Tilly 1992, 5. Cf. already Tilly 1975.

(204.) Tilly 1992.

(205.) Tilly 1992, 14–15, 27–28. See also Hall 1986c.

(206.) Tilly 1985, 173–175, 1992, 29–30.

(207.) Tilly 1992, 87–88; Bonney and Ormrod 1999.

(208.) Tilly 1985, 182.

(209.) Tilly 1992, 96–126. See above, in the section on Properties. Cf. also Barbera 1998 for the nexus between the rise of “political society” and military mobilization in different periods.

(210.) Spruyt 1994, 29–33; Ertman 1997, 19–34; Downing 1992. Cf. also Goldstone 1991b.

Studying the State

(211.) Porter 1994, 11–19; Kasza 1996, 364–368; Thompson and Rasler 1999. Cf. McNeill 1982; Van Creveld 1989. See Gat 2006 for the centrality of warfare in human development in general.

(212.) Kasza 1996, 365; Tilly 1992, 15. See already Hintze in Gilbert 1975, 183.

(213.) Within European history, the “cultural turn” is now more en vogue, stressing complexity and contingency and resisting comprehensive models: cf. Steinmetz 1999; Gorski 2001.

(214.) Tilly 1992, 15–16.

(215.) Finer 1997, 15–23; Andreski 1968.

(216.) Eich and Eich 2005, 7–15. See also Scheidel forthcoming.

(217.) Hall 1986b, 10. On forms of early warfare, cf. Raaflaub and Rosenstein 1999.

(218.) Hui 2005; cf. Scheidel 2009a.

(219.) Skocpol 1979; for discussion see Collins 1995, 1562–1563; Li 2002, 4–6.

(220.) Goldstone 1991a.

(221.) Turchin 2003, 118–196; Turchin and Nedefov 2009, 1–34. Cf. also Turchin 2006. For Malthusian theory, see esp. Lee 1986a; Wood 1998.

(222.) Turchin and Nefedov 2009, 28–29.

(223.) Cf. Lee 1986b for mortality as an exogenous factor.

(224.) Tainter 1988, esp. 118, 127, 195–196.

(225.) Motyl 2001, 39–87, esp. 48–54, 65, 67.

(226.) Collins 1986, 1901; 1995, 1558–1559 and esp. 1560 fig.1.

(227.) Li 2002, 4, 11–12; Motyl 2001, 80.

(228.) E.g., Skocpol 1979 (three cases); Goldstone (five); Turchin and Nefedov 2009 (eight), claiming a good fit with secular cycles theory (303–314); but cf. Scheidel forthcoming for criticism.

(229.) Cf. Bronson 1988 on the role of peripheral “barbarians.”

Walter Scheidel

Walter Scheidel, Dickason Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Egypt

Joseph G. Manning

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Egyptology, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0003

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of, and the important factors that contributed to, state formation in ancient Egypt during the period from around 3500 BCE to the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty in 30 BCE. It explains that there are four major cycles of centralization and three cycles of crisis in Egyptian history, and that the account of both are often exaggerated. The chapter also discusses the three main trends in the understanding of the Egyptian state and the different models of state of formation.

Keywords: ancient Egypt, state formation, Ptolemaic dynasty, centralization, crisis

Introduction

In this chapter I survey the history and the institutions of the ancient Egyptian state from roughly 3500 BCE to the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the last ruling family in ancient times, in 30 BCE.¹ That is a lot of ground to cover. But in doing so, I think it becomes clear that Egypt is a very important place in which to study the long-run history of a premodern state, the development of its institutions, and the role of geography and climate in state building. We cannot fully describe the development of the Egyptian state over the course of its 3,000-plus years of ancient history; the evidence does not suffice for that. At particular moments in time, however, such as the Middle Kingdom, the New Kingdom, and the Ptolemaic period, the evidence for the structure and the development of the state is good enough to provide the basis of a general description of each period. Many previous descriptions of the Egyptian state have either been dedicated to one particular phase of Egyptian history (the New Kingdom is the best studied) or to a single

institution such as kingship, which was always at the center of state ideology. Long-run studies of what Turchin and Nefedov (2009) refer to as “secular cycles” that link demography to trends in climate and institutional change remain to be accomplished for Egypt, but it is Egypt that offers one of the best opportunities to do so. Egyptian history presents four major cycles of centralization (Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms; Saite-Persian-Ptolemaic periods) and three cycles of “crisis” (from the point of view of the central state). In both cases, the degree of centralization and fragmentation (p. 62) are probably exaggerated. This article is intended as an overview rather than one that seeks to analyze the secular cycles of Egyptian history directly. I begin with a summary of approaches, before turning to a sketch of climatic parameters. I then summarize the history of the state by period and, finally, end with an overview of the key institutions.

Current Trends in the Study of the Ancient Egyptian State

Egypt was among the earliest territorial states in the world. The comparative study of the Egyptian state dates back to the Greeks' fascination with Egypt. The observations of Herodotus written in the fifth century BCE in Book 2 of his *Histories* and, in the fourth century BCE, of Aristotle in his *Politics*, as well as dynastic structure set out by Manetho in the third century BCE, have all shaped the understanding of ancient Egypt for more than two millennia. Even when Egyptian writing systems had been deciphered by the latter part of the nineteenth century and ancient Egypt could be understood in its own terms, scholars generally followed the basic framework laid out by classical authors. Royal monuments and central administrative records where they exist have been the primary material evidence for the historical understanding of the state and its development. What has been produced as a result of these emphases on the king and the central state apparatus has often been a picture of the state in which there was very little development, giving a static quality to the image of ancient Egypt. That view of a changeless Egypt, so often coupled with a vague Orientalism, has changed dramatically in recent years.

There have been three main trends in the understanding of the Egyptian state. The first has been driven by the development of Egyptological research. Philology has dominated the field, with publication and cataloguing of inscriptions, papyri, and so on. Archaeological inquiry traditionally has focused on temples, the tombs of elites, and art history. The exception was Flinders Petrie, who developed more scientific approaches to archaeological work. Egyptian archaeology has been slow, to say the least, to adopt the more sophisticated methods of archaeological survey done elsewhere in the Mediterranean (Parcak 2008). Things are beginning to change, although ancient urban sites with a few exceptions remain understudied, and broader settlement surveys remain an important desideratum if we are to understand state expansion and economic performance over time (see, e.g., the UCLA-Rijksuniversiteit Groningen Fayyum survey project: <http://www.archbase.com/fayum>). Studies continue to appear that treat the Egyptian state synchronically (Kemp 2006, with emphasis on the archaeological evidence) as well as diachronically (Valbelle 1998; Wenke 2009). The origins of kingship and of the Egyptian state have received an enormous amount of attention.

(p. 63) The second trend has been to set Egypt within a comparative ancient civilization framework. This has usually been the approach of anthropologists and historical sociologists. Bruce Trigger, for example, in a programmatic study in 1979, analyzed ancient Egypt in a comparative anthropological framework. That work culminated in his magisterial 2003 monograph *Understanding early civilizations: A comparative study*. The use of Egypt as a case study in long-term comparisons with other states continues by both Egyptologists (Baines and Yoffee 1998) and comparative sociologists. Among the most important by the latter has been the first volume of Michael Mann's *The Sources of social*

power (1986). For Mann Egypt offers an important demonstration of the caging effects of the Nile River on the emergence of social stratification and power networks. Mann's historical-political power model of Egypt suggests that there was "early and rapid" (1986, 114) state institutional development and then a stable political equilibrium. While the pharaonic framework was indeed always maintained, and there is widespread agreement about important continuities across some dynasties and between larger periods such as the Old and Middle Kingdoms, Mann's model neglects both the politically decentralized intermediate periods and the noteworthy institutional adjustments from one centralized period to the next (Kemp 1983). The New Kingdom state, for example, arguably the strongest and largest of the second millennium, is significantly undervalued both in its institutional development and in its legacy by Mann (1986, 114).

The third trend in scholarship has been the setting of the Egyptian state within a comparative sociological framework (Weeks 1979; el-Masry 2004). These studies emphasize imperial expansion and world systems approaches (Ekholm and Friedman 1979; Smith 1997). The historical social sciences have long used Egyptian material in discussions of social organization and state power in the development of civilization, although Egyptology has usually ignored these. Such contextualization goes back to Max Weber's study *The agrarian sociology of ancient civilizations* (1909). Certainly the most important comparative work using the Egyptian state as a major example has been Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power* published in 1957. In that book Wittfogel articulates his theory of Asian states that connect irrigation to despotic centralized state power. The work has been more influential among anthropologists and economists than Egyptologists.

Even if the academic debate is now "closed" on the subject (Briant 2006, 344), it is useful to see where we have been if only to get a sense of what is still carried over from earlier scholarship. Typically, it is a kind of shorthand for the (assumed) political economy of Asian states, and the concept fit in well with many scholars' views about the differences between East and West (cf. Morris 1994, 20–21). Beginning with the central contrast between Greece and Persia that is the thesis of Herodotus's *Histories*, and Aristotle's critique of Asian states (*Politics* 1.1255b), through the influential writing of Max Weber, the concept of oriental despotism is meant to contrast Asian monarchies with democratic states of the West. The former was characterized by closed politics, labor tied to the land, an absence of (p. 64) private property, and static societies; the latter by openness, democratic government, and individual freedom. A coercive system of labor organization and property relations explained the large public works projects in the ancient river valley states of China, India, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. The ruler was without opposition and was supported by a dependent bureaucratic elite (O'Leary 1989, 41).

Wittfogel's monumental treatise (1957) summarized much nineteenth-century historical thinking about the political economy of early states, particularly Asian states, which were associated with irrigation agriculture. His argument is complex, and his attempt to link water management to levels of technology, property rights, the structure of the state, and social power was impressive. At its most basic level, the despotic model in Egypt was a

“linear causality model” that linked environmental stress to irrigation, and the need to control irrigation networks led to the formation of a hydraulic bureaucracy for centralized control of economic resources (Butzer 1976, 111). “Hydraulic” agriculture led to “total power” within the state. While there is still much of interest in Wittfogel’s thesis most assessments have soundly criticized the general theory as being “overextended” and “undifferentiated.” Among the most important things lacking in the study was an awareness of the intricate social connections established through diffused social networks and landholding patterns created above all by the social interconnections between temples (Mann 1986; Butzer 1996; cf. Deng 1999, 103–105). Irrigation in Egypt was generally on a small scale, coordinated locally without much state interference. As in China, the state played a minimal role in the agricultural sector, and total control in any area was never achieved (cf. Deng 1999, 105–106).

Karl Butzer’s *Early hydraulic civilization in Egypt: A study in cultural ecology* (1976), although written by a geoarchaeologist, is perhaps the single most important book written about the premodern Egyptian state, stressing the connections between state development, demography, political economy, and the Nile flood regime. Therein, Butzer argues convincingly against Wittfogel’s theory as it pertained to Egypt, stating that the linkage between “hydraulic agriculture” and the “political structure and society” was indirect (Butzer 1976, 110–111).

Models of Understanding the Egyptian State

The Egyptian state has been central to debates about the nature and the structure of governance in Asian states since Aristotle’s comparative treatment of governance that drew a contrast between authoritarian and open, democratic rule epitomized by the fifth-century Athenian state. The nature of kingship and the special connection between the theocratic and political position of the pharaoh within the Egyptian state has always been at the center of the debate. The term “pharaoh” was used of the king only properly from the New Kingdom on. Before then the (p. 65) term “pharaoh,” literally “great house,” referred more broadly to the central state apparatus that revolved around the royal household. Several models of the ancient Egyptian state have been proposed. The first such model was built in contrast to Greek city-states by Herodotus, Aristotle, and others. This model I call the “orientalist” or “despotic” model. Egypt was regarded as static, unchanging, highly centralized, and despotic. This understanding of the Egyptian state may be traced from Aristotle down to Wittfogel’s massive study of Asian states in 1957 (Manning 2010, 36–45). These views are not altogether incorrect. Even ancient Egyptian stories seem to echo the fearsome power of the Old Kingdom kings who built the pyramids of Giza. Such ancient stories were later picked up by Herodotus in his *Histories* (Harrison 2003). But the model fails to do two things. It does not contextualize royal power within a historical context, that is, it assumes that all kings were despotic. It fails,

Egypt

secondly, to take account of the political processes involved between the king and other actors—the priesthoods and temples, the military class (for the New Kingdom), and so on.

A second model of understanding the Egyptian state is what I call the “Egyptological” model. It stresses the uniqueness of the environment and the institutional and cultural forms that ancient Egyptian civilization took. The king, according to this model, was at the center of the state, and he owned and/or controlled all resources within the state. Periods of strong centralization with an Egyptian ruling family in control, thus the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, are emphasized. This model, of course, is built upon the evidence of the central state and its elites, emphasizing political history, state cults, and so on. After the collapse of the New Kingdom in 1069 BCE, Egypt was ruled by outsiders, either as part of imperial states (e.g., Persia) or as the center of an empire ruled by Greeks (the Ptolemies). In these cases, outside rule brought in new institutional reforms that changed the fundamental character of the state. Comparisons with other state forms are thus unproductive in such a model.

Parameters



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 2.1 Pharaonic Egypt.

The physical boundaries of ancient Egypt, while not comprising the whole of the deserts to the east or west of the Nile valley, essentially are the same as the Arab Republic of Egypt (See Map 2.1). While certain aspects remain in dispute, the general outlines of state expansion suggest that the Egyptian state arose from a southern Egyptian core and expanded northward down the Nile valley to gain control of the Delta, and thus access to routes to the Near East, and southward into Nubia. Both expansions were at least in part driven by the desire to control mineral resources: copper mines in the Sinai peninsula, gold and other raw materials in Nubia and the adjacent eastern desert

(Zibelius-Chen 1988). At the height of its development, ancient Egypt comprised four basic occupied areas, the Delta, (p. 66) (p. 67) the Fayyum, the Nile valley, and the western oases. The southern political border of Egypt was located, from the Old Kingdom onward, at modern-day Aswan. The Fayyum, never very densely settled, had two peak periods of development: during the twelfth dynasty, in the Middle Kingdom period, and in Ptolemaic/early Roman times. Various estimates of the population and its development have been proposed. Hassan (1994, 170) reaches the following estimates, taking into

Egypt

account size of cultivable area, gross and net yield, per capita consumption, and the urban/rural population ratio. Estimates for the population are: Old Kingdom, 1.23 million; New Kingdom, 2.12 million; and Greco-Roman, 3.23 million.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 2.2 Ptolemaic Egypt.

Activities of new settlement, with new land being placed under cultivation, ebbed and flowed throughout history. Much of the middle Egyptian Nile valley remained undeveloped even in Middle Kingdom times (Allen 2004). It is therefore difficult to build a complete political narrative history of the Egyptian state; the nature of the evidence is clumped together around a few important sites in the (p. 68) north, around the funerary complexes of Old Kingdom kings outside of

Memphis (Saqqara and Giza principal among them) and in Upper Egypt. Other regions have a more fragmented record, the Delta the region of most serious lack, although this has improved in recent years. As a result of the available evidence and the traditional reliance on written evidence, the emphasis has usually been placed on periods of central control of Egypt, but these, in light of the whole of Egyptian history, were exceptional periods. In periods of weak central control, or none at all, Egypt tended to splinter into several smaller political units. The history of the central state is discontinuous in Egypt. This is an important point about Egyptian history. There were four periods of strong centralized political structure in pre-Roman Egyptian history: the Old Kingdom (ca. 2575–2150 BCE); the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1775–1640 BCE); the New Kingdom (ca. 1539–1075 BCE); and the Saite period down through the Ptolemies (664–30 BCE), although there was not a major break in socioeconomic structure through the Late Antique period. The historical periods between these phases, called “intermediate periods,” are marked by weak central state institutions. The relationship between the central state and local power bases, always present, could be tipped by fluctuations in the average annual Nile discharge (Butzer 1980).

The Nile River, Irrigation, and the State

In contrast to China's Yellow River, the Nile flooded predictably and, generally, gently. But there were times when the Nile flooded unpredictably and wildly that affected production and demographic trends negatively (Hassan 1994, 162–164). The flood flushed salts from the soil and provided nutrients. The intervention of the state, while occasional, was not heavy-handed. Even irrigation machines such as the *shaduf* were not introduced from the Near East until the New Kingdom, and the animal-driven water wheel *saqiya* was not used before the Ptolemaic period. The former had little impact on the intensification of production, being restricted generally to small-scale gardening and fruit tree production (Eyre 1994, 64, with the literature cited). Water-lifting machines were generally restricted to use in gardens and for “high value or intensive vegetable and orchard crops” (Eyre 1994, 58). Canal digging and the creation of new irrigation basins are documented in the Old Kingdom, perhaps going hand in hand with pyramid construction. There is little evidence for an “irrigation revolution” (Schenkel 1978) in the First Intermediate Period circa 2100 BCE. Rather, improvements and developments were generally small in scale and gradual in coming.

While earlier scholarship on Asia and the Near East has often noted causal links between “hydraulic” agriculture and centralized power, which led to a “despotic” (p. 69) form of rule, irrigation and production were generally organized at the local level (Bonneau 1993; Butzer 1996). Studies of the documentary evidence and the valuable art historical evidence from private tombs of orchards and plantations, some small and others of considerable scale, detail the complex interactions between the state (including temples), demography, land reclamation, and private initiative (Eyre 1994). The administrative control of agriculture, to quote Eyre (1994, 74), was rather more “varied, complex, and ramshackle.” There were certainly large-scale state-directed projects, such as the Fayyum in the Middle Kingdom and again under the Ptolemies. The state's ability to move populations into new areas of exploitation was important, but most development should best be characterized as gradual adjustments from the Old Kingdom on through the building of canals, dykes, and so on. In no case was there ever developed a managerial bureaucracy centered on irrigation or production; there “never was an integrated system of basin or canal management or water allocation” (Butzer 1999, 382). The fundamental impetus for the creation, maintenance, and innovation of such systems was largely local and constituted ad hoc responses to demographic and environmental pressures.

The early civilizations of Egypt, the Indus river valley, Mesopotamia, and China were all civilizations based on “alluvial agriculture” (Mann 1986, 73–104, for some general sociological considerations). These important river valleys allowed the possibility of the centralization of political and economic power because of the caging effects of the river valley that “captured” a population within a circumscribed territory. The absence of political opposition at the local level in Egypt allowed the king to assert monopoly power over communications along the river as well as over raw materials (principally stone and metals used for tools), and the productivity of Egyptian soil produced large surpluses (Mann 1986, 112). This, of course, was the key to state success. There was never any

Egypt

need to develop or control irrigation, nor did irrigation lead to despotic control as long as an effective system of tax collection was developed.

The institutions of central governance arose at the end of the fourth millennium BCE and centered on divine kingship, long before the first attempts by the state to use artificial irrigation. They cannot be explained, therefore, as having arisen out of the state's control of irrigation. Rather, the despotic nature of state ideology was probably a result of the local character of the Egyptian system and the requirement that the king be elevated above the diffuse, socially stratified local power structures. Even the Ptolemies, whose intervention in Egypt in the late fourth century BC has unique characteristics, maintained this pharaonic ideology.

According to Gellner's general model of premodern states, political weakness arose from the relatively small size and social isolation of the bureaucratic elite who were insulated from the communities of agricultural producers (Gellner 1983, 9). The underlying structural issue caused by the state's need for revenue, what economists call the "coordination problem," meant that it faced high costs in communication and enforcement that were exacerbated by the asymmetric flow of information.

(p. 70) The case of Egypt, with its ancient tradition of powerful kings and a hierarchic bureaucracy, would appear to be an exception to Gellner's model, the natural tendency of political fragmentation and high costs alleviated by the strong "caging effect" (Mann 1986, 112–114) of the river valley that achieved nearly a "unitary social system" (Mann 1986, 114). But the bureaucracy was limited in its effectiveness, and the pharaoh relied on fostering the loyalty of the local elite through a political system that sanctioned rent-seeking by them in exchange for loyalty to the center, with the requirement of mustering local labor when required. In fact the key to central power in Egypt was the ability of the king, through the local elite, to muster local labor—for military campaigns (before a standing army was organized during the New Kingdom), canal clearance, expeditions to quarry stone—and, of course, to tax and redistribute agricultural production through the local temples. In periods of poor Nile flooding, however, the political structure linking villages, to district (nome) capitals, to the political center, in an "internested hierarchy" of population centers (Skinner quoted in E. Wilkinson 2000, 5), was often severed. There was in Egypt, to be sure, a "centralizing principle" strengthened by the near monopoly of the king on image and text. A phrase such as the "water of pharaoh" (i.e., "public canal") shows the extent of royal ideology, but it does not measure royal intervention into local economies. The assignment of rights to land, especially new land, would also have been a royal prerogative, the normal mechanism of which was the gift of land to officials and to soldiers. Intervillage and regional cooperation could also be strengthened by the common practice of split holdings of land and the religious rituals of the temple estates, but there were no central state institutions that can be associated with control of the irrigation network (Bonneau 1993; Eyre 2000).

This political response, as in other irrigation societies, created a bottom-heavy or “feudal” social organization. The irrigation of fields was organized around the flood basins. The cleaning of canals, the protection of the dikes, the measurement of the flood, the lending of seed, the survey of the fields, and the payment of rent and tax from the land were all organized at the local level through local institutions yet with obvious great concern of the king and the organs of the central state. The state faced no internal rivals, and there were no powerful city-states as in Mesopotamia to serve as counterweight to royal power (Ekholm and Friedman 1979).

Prehistory of the Egyptian State

The evidence for early man living in the Nile valley is extensive, dating back to at least circa 1.5 million years before the present (BP). The Nile River was a major channel in the theory of African origins and the dispersal of early hominids out of East Africa. During the Lower Paleolithic (700,000–250,000 BP), although problems abound with dating of objects and spatial distribution, the presence of early (p. 71) man passing through the western desert plateau living in wetter conditions is clear. Middle Paleolithic, permanent lakes allowed humans to exploit fauna and floral resources in the western desert and in the eastern desert as well. Little is known about the Nile valley proper. A drier climate began in the Upper Paleolithic. The earliest burial of an “anatomically modern” human in Egypt (and probably in Africa for that matter) comes from the quarrying site of Taramsa Hill near Qena, Upper Egypt (Vermeersch et al. 1998). Evidence for the permanent settlement of the Nile valley, however, dates back only about 20,000 years. The Late Paleolithic (24,000–10,000 BP) is well attested in Upper Egypt. The Badarian culture is the first evidence of agriculture in Upper Egypt, probably as early as circa 5000 BCE but really only confirmed beginning circa 4400 BCE (Hendrickx and Vermeersch 2003, 36). It has become increasingly clear that populations in the western desert played a major role in socioeconomic development throughout Egypt’s prehistory.

Dynastic Cycles in Egyptian History

Mann (1986, 110) suggests that once Egypt became a territorially centralized state the state was “well-nigh continuous.” If by “state” we mean that a single king controlled the Delta and the river valley up to Aswan, that is not quite true. Indeed one of the most characteristic features of Egyptian history are the dynastic cycles, centralized states alternating with phases of decentralization. The so-called intermediate period between two centralized dynastic cycles is associated with demographic decline, a lack of central institutions, and thus political fragmentation and little monumental building. Mann’s

emphasis (1986, 161ff.) on the weakness of kings and their consequent reliance on elites is correct.

The organization of Egyptian history into ruling families or “dynasties” derives from the Ptolemaic Egyptian priest Manetho, whose account of Egyptian history written in Greek circa 270 BCE survives in fragments. There were three main centralized phases in Egyptian history: the Old Kingdom, comprising four dynasties, lasted 526 years; the Middle Kingdom, three dynasties, lasted 405 years; and the New Kingdom, three dynasties, lasted 481 years. Each centralized political phase controlled a larger territorial base.

The correlation between long-term flood interannual variability of the Nile River and centralized governance has been summarized by Bell (1971; 1975) and Butzer (1980). There was a decline in flood volume (roughly estimated at -30%) between Dynasties 1 and 2; Dynasty 7 through 8 and the First Intermediate Period, Dynasty 13 and the Second Intermediate Period, and from late Dynasty 20 through the early Third Intermediate Period. Other factors, such as dynastic disputes, long-lived monarchs (Pepi II at the end of Dynasty 6), institutional weakness, and external threats contributed to the decline of centralized state power. But it seems clear from the flood records that the relationship between centralized phases of (p. 72) Egyptian political history and optimal flooding of the river, producing surplus grain, was correlated, and thus that the politically fragmented periods of Egyptian history are also associated with Nile flood deficiencies.

Development of the Egyptian State

The Fourth Millennium BCE

Several theories have been advanced regarding the rise of the state, from circumscription theory (expansion through demographic pressure), to irrigation, trade, and ideology (summarized by Wilkinson 2000a). The causal link between irrigation and hegemonic state power has long since been refuted, although the river was a powerful force for social stratification and state formation. The river valley, in Mann’s (1986, 108) famous phrase, had a “caging effect” on population as well as providing a stimulus to population growth. Developing irrigation led to a rise in population, social stratification, and, at least in the most densely populated part of the river valley in southern Egypt, the emergence of a centralized state.

The control of trade routes through Nubia and Palestine also appears to have had a major effect. Trade connections to both areas appear in the archaeological record very early, and especially impressive is the large amount of aromatic oils imported from these areas for royal burials (Bard and Fattovich 2007). The development of the control of trade, and

Egypt

its administrative apparatus, accounting, writing, and so on, along with the formation of ideological structures of political legitimation, both further extended and accelerated state centralization processes.

The period when small city-states emerged in the south is now referred to as Dynasty 0, comprising a group of kings not part of the received tradition of Dynasty 1, when kings from Thinis (Abydos) ruled Egypt from Memphis and set the stage for the rest of ancient Egyptian history. Foundations of bureaucratic structure, with a “vizier” and taxing mechanisms, were in place, and administrative districts, known conventionally as nomes (after the Greek), were established by Dynasty 2.

Regional differences are characteristic of Egypt from the Paleolithic record on, the result of cultural differences as well as geographical factors. Upper Egypt in the fourth millennium shows more competitiveness, social stratification, advanced ceramic technology, and mud brick architecture of elites. The ideology of kingship was developed by certain Upper Egyptian centers (Naqada, Hierakonpolis, Abydos, and Qustul in Lower Nubia) circa 3500 BCE. Hierakonpolis (Nekhen) played an especially important role in state formation and the development of the royal ideology (the cult of the hawk god Horus was developed here and remained the most important symbol of legitimate royal power through history). Small objects in tombs at Abydos already prove “large-scale” trade connections with Syria-Palestine and as far away as Afghanistan (lapis lazuli). Writing, at the earliest (p. 73) stages, exists in the form of labels but is already enough to demonstrate an early conception of the state and its (growing) territory.

First Phases of State Centralization

Royal ideology was already well developed by Dynasty 1 and is documented in the monumental buildings and grave goods at the royal cemetery in Abydos. There is very little evidence for bureaucratic structure beyond titles, most of which appear to have been honorific, and for agents of revenue collection. The king, and thus the political center, was mobile, and taxes were directly collected during royal visits to the provinces.

Old Kingdom (2686-2160 BCE)

Much remains mysterious about the history of the Old Kingdom and the functioning of the Old Kingdom state. The history of the period is a history of the royal families and the archaeology of the royal necropoleis. Very few administrative documents survive from the Old Kingdom. The key features of the state in this phase are the large monuments built as royal mortuary complexes at the end of Dynasty 3 (Djoser’s Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara) and the complexes of Dynasty 4 kings on the Giza plateau. At the end of the Old Kingdom phase, important political developments are reflected in the smaller size of royal monuments vis-à-vis the new solar temples at Abu Sir, and the rock-cut tombs of local elites in Upper Egypt. Both of these features are thought to indicate the rise in

importance of both the solar cult and its priesthoods and of provincial governance in Upper Egypt (Kemp 1983, 96–112). Trade expeditions into Nubia are well documented in tomb biographies dating to the end of the Old Kingdom. The Palermo Stone records expeditions into western Asia.

As a territorial state, Egypt was characterized by its bureaucratic administrative organization (Trigger 2003, 209–211). Along with China, Egypt was one of the two “great examples of ‘classical’ bureaucracy” (Hicks 1969, 20). The state managed to mobilize labor through a bureaucratic chain of command that connected it to the provinces. With very few external threats until the Hyksos of the Second Intermediate Period, warfare seems to have been more about royal prestige than defense (Gnirs 1999, 78). Foreign troops appear to have been a standard feature of the military from the Old Kingdom onward, and the navy was the main fighting force down to the New Kingdom. The fifth dynasty inscription known as the Palermo Stone (Wilkinson 2000b) records large-scale quasi-military expeditions, suggesting, as with pyramid building, that the central state, while taking the numbers in ancient texts *cum grano salis*, had a capacity to organize and mobilize upward of 20,000 men for particular projects. Warfare was “totalizing; enemies were utterly defeated and eliminated or removed” (Gnirs 1999). Landed estates, royal, temple, or land in private hands, were taxed. Religious institutions and so-called pious foundations were prime movers in (p. 74) local economies. They were centered on tax-free land and focused on local cults of the king and local elite. A biennial cattle census is documented, and it probably documented both real assets beyond cattle ownership as well the occupation of individuals. The principal agent of the administration is called by modern scholars the “vizier,” an office documented for all phases of central state history in Egypt. Later two viziers held office simultaneously, one responsible for northern administration of the bureaucratic system, including law, and one for the south (Van den Boorn 1988).

The Old Kingdom is characterized by its royal monuments built in stone, the largest stone structures in the world until the Great Wall in China, and profound examples of the use of “architecture as political statement” (Kemp 2006, 99). The building of such large-scale monuments such as the Great Pyramid were deemed “futile” by Mann (1986, 109). But we should not, of course, underestimate the belief system of those who built the monument nor the employment function of the state and the rank hierarchy enforced by such monumental statements. Such efforts led to impressive bureaucratic control of the project and also to state expansion into Nubia seeking material and human resources (Bietak 1979, 130). Beyond the efforts of building monumental stone structures on behalf of the ruler, however, the building projects demonstrate the organizational capacity of the early state to mobilize resources, and the building itself over many years must have influenced the development of state institutions themselves. Throughout the Old Kingdom the king’s residence is associated with building projects, and mobility was a key feature of kingship. The building of the Great Pyramid at Giza mobilized roughly 20,000 men per year over thirty years, in a population estimated to have been 1.5 million in Dynasty 4 times. Centralized political authority of the Egyptian king may have reached a peak at this time. A modicum of administrative control was asserted over the countryside

Egypt

probably during Dynasty 3. Memphis was the political center of the state. Nomes, or administrative districts, under the taxing authority of an official appointed by the king, were the key political units of the state. Other officials emerge in the record, estate managers, temple officials, governors of new towns, all linked to the center. There was an increased use of writing in the administration. Specialized agents only emerge by the end of the Old Kingdom (Butzer 2008).

In the early Old Kingdom the emphasis was on the king and his family. Royal mortuary complexes are probably best understood first and foremost as the centers of ancestor cults, thus forming the basis of dynastic and thus of state continuity (Kemp 1983, 85). A new type of temple, dedicated to the sun god, appears and is thought to reflect a change in the political institutions of the state, the king now sharing power with the rise of the priesthoods. The political capital was established and remained established at Memphis, characterized by the “white walls” of the royal palace complex, which is reflected in the Djoser’s funerary complex at Saqqara. The details in the evolution of state institutions during the Old Kingdom are far from numerous, and much of the material documents Upper Egypt, but the correlations between smaller pyramids and the development and growth of provincial administration appear to be well founded.

The end of the Old Kingdom (i.e., the end of royal court culture) is marked by the long reign of Pepi II, perhaps the longest-reigning monarch in world history (p. 75) although the actual length of his rule is disputed (sixty-four or ninety-four years). Based on the biographies of officials from the later Old Kingdom, it appears that an administrative system and a bureaucratic structure outside of the royal family were already developed in the great age of pyramid construction (Strudwick 1985). Much remains in doubt about state collapse (Müller-Wollermann 1986). A combination of factors, the growing power of provincial elites, perhaps combined with poor flooding conditions, are the likeliest reasons for the end of the Old Kingdom.

First Intermediate Period (2160-2055 BCE)

The collapse of the Old Kingdom, and for the other periods of centralization, is generally attributed to a combination of factors (Kemp 1983, 174-182). O'Connor (1993) stresses the inherent instability of the political system itself. Political instability was no doubt exacerbated at certain times by other factors that led to central state collapse inter alia poor Nile River flooding and external threats. Scholars have usually sought a change in Nile flooding patterns as the main reason for the collapse of the Old Kingdom state (Bell 1971). The end of the Old Kingdom and the rise of the First Intermediate Period, lasting about a century, was a period during which drier, more arid conditions prevailed throughout the Middle East (Issar and Zohar 2004, 132-146), and indeed there is good evidence, both in tomb depictions and in literary descriptions, of famine in the First Intermediate Period. But the failure to make political adjustments in the evolving relationships between the king and local power bases were perhaps the most important factor in the collapse of the central state. The return to regionalism in part was the natural political equilibrium of the Nile valley. Importantly, these so-called intermediate periods were times of creativity that led to the reemergence of a central state with new characteristics and a new image of kingship. It is in the next phase of centralization that we can see both a major change in funerary practice and an expression of the ideal state in literary texts for the first time.

Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE)

The Middle Kingdom arose from the ashes of civil war between a Theban family and a northern family that comprised Manetho's Dynasties 9 and 10. The emergence of the Middle Kingdom is associated with a Theban military family who conquered the north. The town of Thebes rose to prominence. This was a great age of Egyptian culture, refined art, and literary achievement but also a period in which a more articulated bureaucracy was developed and extended over wider areas of Egypt and Nubia (Grajetzki 2006). Administrative centers were established in key towns and were headed up by "nomarchs" personally responsible, in theory (p. 76) at least, to the king himself. Later reforms of Sesostri III of Dynasty 12 divided political control between northern and southern officials. A standing army under a separate administrative structure was developed, at least by the latter half of the period. Campaigns into western Asia and Nubia expanded state influence. A more permanent presence of the Egyptian state outside of its traditional borders was established along the Nubian Nile River by a series of fortified towns designed in the main to control river traffic and trade. A defensive posture toward the rising Kerma state in Nubia may also have contributed to the Egyptian expansion (Gnirs 1999, 81). The military was based in the provinces and mobilized when needed,

Egypt

and Nubian soldiers (the so-called Medjay people from the eastern desert) were also employed. The period, particularly Dynasty 12, is characterized both by a more developed bureaucratic structure and strong provincial families. A new sector of royal administration appears to have been in charge of forced labor (Hayes 1955).

Second Intermediate Period (1650-1550 BCE)

The end of the Middle Kingdom was a confused period of Egyptian kingship known conventionally as Dynasty 13. This was often not included in standard chronologies of the Middle Kingdom, but the continuity between the twelfth and thirteenth dynasties is now well established. The number of kings is debated, but it seems clear that there were more than fifty who reigned for very short periods of time (Ryholt 1997). In this period, viziers were often in control. Egypt became divided by the coming of the Hyksos rulers ("foreign kings" probably comprised of several different tribes from Palestine), which led to a division into two spheres of political control. The Delta and the Nile valley down to Cusae near Hermopolis were controlled by Hyksos kings. Six Hyksos kings governed the north from their capital at Avaris for a little over a hundred years. The Hyksos also apparently controlled the western oases routes down to Nubia (Bourriau 2000, 188). A ruling family from Upper Egypt controlled the Thebaid and was based at Thebes. A long period of struggle, lasting some thirty years, was initiated by the Theban rulers to expel the Hyksos from Egypt. The aftermath of Hyksos rule in Egypt left both psychological trauma, at least as it finds expression in New Kingdom royal ideology, and several important technical innovations of western Asia that were adapted by Egyptians. The composite bow, the chariot, and the horse are the most significant of these and all would be combined to great effect in the next phase of central power (Shaw 2001).

New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE)

The ancient Egyptian state reached its peak territorial, bureaucratic, and overall demographic size during the New Kingdom, to be surpassed only in the Ptolemaic/early Roman period (Kemp 1978; Frandsen 1979; Gnirs 1996; O'Connor 1983; (p. 77) Smith 1997; Taagepera 1978). The New Kingdom, the “mature state” (Kemp 2006, 247) in Egypt’s ancient history, was one of the world’s first imperial states, forming part of a large “international system” (Van de Mierop 2007, 129) of interlinked states in the eastern Mediterranean basin. Clearly state expansion into Nubia and western Asia was more extensive and more permanent than earlier. Material culture, particularly as it expressed royal power in the temples and in festivals, had changed significantly from earlier periods. The performance of royal power was increasingly emphasized especially as it pertained to military prowess. The king was now by and large defined as a military man of action. State institutions became more formal, the major temples richer in terms of resources and more powerful with respect to the performance of kingship (Warburton 1997). Thebes became a “ceremonial city” (Kemp 2006, 264) in which elaborate state religious ritual stressing military conquest on behalf of the god Amun-Re, “king of the gods,” occurred. The New Kingdom pharaohs built large mortuary temples dedicated to their perpetual memory on the west bank of the Nile that were linked to festivals at the main temples on the east side. A standing professional army was established with its own ethos and its own bureaucratic chain of command. In general, soldiers were established as farmers in a type of kleruchic system and mobilized when required. Foreign mercenary soldiers, primarily from Libya but also from traditional areas in Nubia, were also extensively utilized. Many estimates of the size of the Egyptian army have been proposed, mainly on the basis of the descriptions of battles, which are unreliable. Most estimates seem to settle on a figure of circa 20,000 men (Spalinger 2005, 149, 202–204) for Dynasty 18, somewhat higher in the Ramesside period (Dynasties 19–20, 1295–1069 BCE) with the incorporation of foreign troops. Interestingly, this level of mobilization would be in line with massive state projects in other periods, such as pyramid building in the Old Kingdom and land reclamation in the Ptolemaic period.

Nubia became a province of the Egyptian state and administered by a “viceroys” called “the king’s son of Kush.” Control of resources in the Nubian river valley, including gold, was a major reason for state expansion into the region (Klemm and Klemm 1994). Smith (1997, 72) has understood the nature of the Egyptian Nubia as “equilibrium colonialism.” During the Middle Kingdom Lower Nubia was administered as part of Upper Egypt (“the head of the south”). The pattern was continued into the New Kingdom (Smith 1997, 82). Archaeological studies at sites such as Askut (Smith 1995) have suggested the strong continuity of occupation by Egyptian administrative families from the middle to the early New Kingdom (Smith 1997). In the Nubian Nile valley temples were built, and the arable land was extended. This expansion was clearly at least in part motivated by the desire to

Egypt

control resources and trade flows, including gold and other luxury items such as animal skins, ivory, and ebony. Agriculture was also intensified in Lower Nubia.

New Kingdom state activity in the Near East was of a different and even less permanent nature than in Nubia, and territory there was less directly exploited. Initial expansion into western Asia in the early New Kingdom was attributed to establishing a defensive buffer zone between Egypt and the Hyksos, whose expulsion from (p. 78) Egypt was the driving ideological force for Theban expansion northward during the seventeenth dynasty. The Egyptians faced major states with large armies (Hittites, Mitanni) and a network of city-states that had long-established relationships. New Kingdom pharaohs established networks of client states and at least a small number of bureaucrats in charge of assessing and collecting tributes.

Usually for a picture of the character of the empire, and the motivation for it, scholars rely on the ideological texts and images recorded in the New Kingdom temples. Texts such as the Annals of Thutmose III provide a fulsome account of the kings' military conquests in the Near East, for example. The depiction in private temples of the presentation of tribute, and the ideology of the king as tamer of foreign lands, were both part of a wider development of ideology that legitimized empire and the role of the king and elites within the imperial system. But, as Kemp has stressed, such texts offer only highly tendentious accounts of the New Kingdom empire and cannot be relied upon to reveal motivations of expansion or the realities of the empire. Scholars have stressed both ideological and economic reasons behind state expansion (Kemp 1978; Smith 1997, 69). Control of territory was no doubt aided by the advanced technology of the Egyptian chariot (Littauer and Crouwel 1996, 2002; Sandor 2004) but Helck's thesis that expansion was driven by the politics and military of early eighteenth-dynasty society are no doubt overdrawn (Helck 1939). Akhenaten's (1352–1336 BCE) attempt to redefine the king's position as the center of the state ended in complete failure and a decline of Egyptian influence abroad. The following Ramesside period again reveals substantial changes to the conception of kingship, which was based on a concept of "elective succession" (Gnirs 1999, 88). Military conquest in Asia was a key to royal legitimacy, and it led to a drawn-out conflict with the Hittite empire that ended in a peace treaty. The following dynasty faced multiple problems including the incursions of Libyans and the so-called sea peoples (Dothan and Dothan 1992) and internal political struggles. The New Kingdom ended with Egypt again divided into two halves.

Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 BCE)

The New Kingdom and its empire collapsed in 1069 BCE with the death of Ramses XI. The Egyptian state was transformed in the first millennium BCE. The political ideal of the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt became a distant memory, with the control of Egypt divided into as many as eleven political centers. The main centers were at Tanis, in the eastern Delta, and Thebes under the control of warlords who carried priestly titles associated with the great Amun temple at Thebes (Kitchen 1986, 16–23). A lack of

Egypt

centralized political control led to the rise of powerful local families in the major urban centers in the Delta and throughout the Nile valley, summarized famously by Herodotus (2.147) as the rule of the “dodecarchy.” The towns are the important centers well known in Egyptian history: Sais, Sebennytos, (p. 79) Memphis, Herakleopolis, and Thebes among them. It is no accident that so many of the official and literary texts produced during the first millennium BC are concerned with the selection and behavior of legitimate kings and connections to the past (Gozzoli 2006). Egyptian scribes and priests perhaps found their influence underscored because it was they who were the transmitters of (theological) history that lay at the foundation of political stability.

Libyans, probably in the main from Cyrenaica, increasingly dominated politics, and the army, in the north (Leahy 1985). This continued a trend seen in the later New Kingdom. Their political and cultural institutions differed substantially from Egyptian ones, yet they dominated the north of Egypt for nearly four centuries. The southern stretches of the Egyptian Nile valley were controlled by both the traditional authority of priesthoods, centered on the Amun temple at Thebes, and by soldiers. Both institutions were effectively combined in the “great army commanders,” descendants of the warlord Herihor, who held sway in the south. Eventually Upper Egypt was split into two polities, centered at Thebes and Herakleopolis.

The involvement of the New Kingdom kings in Syria-Palestine and Nubia also shaped events in the first centuries of the first millennium BCE, as Egypt was invaded from both. The Nubian king Piye, having already nominal control of the Theban region through his sister’s installation as “God’s wife of Amun” in Thebes, invaded Egypt to check the halt of the northern ruler Tefnakhte’s advances south. The result, the twenty-fifth dynasty, was a halting Nubian control of Egypt and a turn to very ancient features of Egyptian civilization to attempt political control over the whole of Egypt. Nubian expansion northward met the Neo-Assyrian imperial expansion against the Babylonians in 701 BCE northwest of Jerusalem. The Assyrians eventually invaded Egypt briefly and established an accord with local rulers in the Delta. It is from that agreement that the important Saite dynasty sprang.

The Saite Restoration (664-525 BCE)

Psammetichus was a ruler of the city of Sais and an Assyrian client. He successfully established a new ruling dynasty, known as Dynasty 26 or the Saite period, in 664 BCE and consolidated his rule by 656 BCE. The details of the centralization process remain largely a mystery, but it is certain that the consolidation was the result of both military power and an acceptance of strong political and cultural traditions (Lloyd 2003).

The use of Ionian and Carian mercenaries was key for the consolidation of political power, especially in the Delta, and the (gradual) imposition of the demotic Egyptian script throughout Egypt was crucial in establishing greater administrative uniformity. Egypt from the seventh century BCE was fully engaged in the Mediterranean in many contexts

beyond literary imagination, and not all of them are as well documented as some. Influence flowed in both directions. Greek culture (p. 80) had an impact on Egypt, and Herodotus's treatment of Egypt served as one important bridge between the Saite kings and the Ptolemies. Archaic Greek art certainly is one visible sign; Necho II's exploration of the African coast with Phoenician sailors shows how engaged the Saite kings were with other cultures of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

Psammetichus I, rather than conquering Upper Egypt by military force, annexed it by successfully having his daughter Nitocris adopted by Shepenwepet II, the God's Wife of Amun, just as the Nubian king Piye had done earlier (Gozzoli 2006, 87–92). The text that documents this political solution, erected within a temple context and therefore overtly pious in its tone, shows how carefully the king couched the move in religious terms, acknowledging the tradition of the Theban theocratic state that arose out of the ashes of the collapse of political authority at the end of the New Kingdom. The adoption of his daughter into the powerful, effective rulers of the Theban region must also have involved more than the simple acceptance of his daughter although we are ignorant of details. His daughter came with a large endowment of land from the north. The delicate political maneuver by Psammetichus shows the continuing economic and political power of the temple of Amun and the civil authority Montuemhat, who represents the reassertion of a unified political state by one ruler through the medium of priestly authority in the south.

The administration of the south of the country appears not to have been much disturbed. The incorporation of the Theban region was a purely political maneuver, although it was no doubt backed by threat. Whatever the case, the majordomo Montuemhat, of Nubian descent, was left in charge of Thebes and little seems to have changed. From this period on, Egypt became part of the wider Mediterranean world and followed trends seen elsewhere. The formation of the Saite state in Egypt coincided with major adjustments to climate change during the early first millennium BCE seen throughout the Mediterranean and beyond (Bokovenko 2004). Around the year 650 BCE through the Hellenistic period there was a significant shift to wetter conditions in the eastern Mediterranean (Issar 2003, 24; cf. Herodotus 3.10), and this must have been a factor in state expansion/consolidation throughout the Mediterranean at this time.

The Saite kings quite intentionally stressed through the use of image and language their deep connection to Egypt's ancient history and their Egyptian origins (Lloyd 1983, 289). The naval power of the Saites, and an apparent Mediterranean policy, was especially notable under Necho II, and both Greek advice and pro-Greek policies, particularly under Amasis, are notable features of the age (Lloyd 2000). The Saite kings were also involved in military campaigns into Nubia.

The founding of the trading colony (*emporion*) at Naukratis by Psammetichus I was a major opening up of Egypt to Greek trade (Bresson 2005). The use of iron, although it was not widespread apparently, was introduced here. Within a couple of generations, that is by the death of Psammetichus in 610 BCE, Egypt was again a strong force in the eastern Mediterranean, and it was a unified state from the Delta to Aswan. How this was

accomplished we are badly informed, but we can make some educated guesses. Without doubt this period, and the following (p. 81) Persian period, was dominated by military presence throughout the country, as the fascinating graffiti recorded in 591 BCE on the famous monument of Ramses II at Abu Simbel attests (Bernard and Masson 1957). Upriver, in the home of the influential and independent temple estates, particularly that of Amun-Re, power was consolidated more indirectly by the use of local elites as a counterweight to the priesthoods.

Memphis was established again as the political center of the country; extensive settlement of foreigners here included Greeks and Carians in Memphis (Thompson 1988, 82-105). Trade, not easily measured in exact terms but clearly increased in volume over previous dynasties, no doubt came along with the influx and created new wealth among the capital's elite seen in the tombs. The rise of the cult of Isis and of animal cults would also continue, in reaction to increasing presence of foreigners, through the Ptolemaic period.

Much has been made of the increase in private documentary records in Egypt beginning with the reign of Shabako and continuing through the Saite period (James 1991, 739). Whether we can discern real reforms or major adjustments, there was no doubt an increase of economic activity brought about by Egypt's opening up to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The rise and the diffusion of demotic Egyptian script, carrying with it its distinct legal traditions, and the changes brought about by new legal forms of texts, was no doubt one of the most important and long-lasting changes set in motion by Psammetichus I.

Building, always associated in Egypt with periods of strongly centralized state control, was renewed. Greeks are first settled during this period, both as soldiers and as traders in the Delta town of Naucratis and perhaps elsewhere. The money economy, however widespread it actually was, began. Although the economy in coin is not the same as monetization, Egypt had long been monetized by several media of exchange that had fixed values relative to each other. The main medium of exchange was grain, and the new demotic language, a cursive form of hieroglyphic used primarily to record business and legal contracts, spread throughout the country and aided in the consolidation of political power. Administrative structure appears to have been traditional (Lloyd 1983, 332-333, provides a brief summary). The main political divisions of the country, as in earlier centralized phases, continued to be administrative districts or nomes governed by nomarchs were responsible to the king primarily for fiscal and to a lesser extent judicial matters.

The Saite dynasty, especially during the reign of Amasis (570-526 BCE), was one of the great periods in Egyptian history. The projection of Saite economic and political power in the Mediterranean and in the Red Sea and into Syria-Palestine was supported by a navy (Lloyd 2000). Amasis's alliance with Polykrates of Samos is especially noteworthy and reveals how connected Egypt was to the Aegean. In large part this was a reaction to the

Persians, but it was also a continuation of the second millennium BC interstate competition for the control of trade flows through Syria-Palestine.

It was also in this period that Carian and Ionian Greeks, Phoenicians, and Jews began to be settled in large numbers. Many in these diverse communities (p. 82) of immigrants assimilated to Egyptian culture to a remarkable extent during the Late Period (Ray 1994, 54-59). Coinage, however widespread it actually was, began to be used. As part of the consolidation, the Delta-based kings established a condominium with the Theban priesthoods and generals and appointed loyal city “governors.” Here again the traditional pattern emerges of administering Upper Egypt as a distinct region, with caution applied because of the sensitivities, and the great influence of the Theban temples. The Saite period was indeed very influential (Gozzoli 2006, 108-109) and the cultural continuities between the Saite and Ptolemaic kings were strong.

Persian Rule (525-404, 343-332 BCE)

Persian intentions and preparations for the invasion of Egypt came to fruition in 525 BCE, perhaps aided by some defections from Amasis’s forces (Herodotus 3.4). This marked the first time in history that Egypt became part of an imperial state system, although the Assyrian and Nubian invasions were short-lived and unhappy precursors. Cambyses, despite the nasty personal reputation reported by Herodotus, tied himself into the Egyptian royal and religious traditions (Posener 1936). Where possible, the Persians attempted a synthesis between Persian and Egyptian traditions of kingship, but the two systems were largely incompatible (Gozzoli 2006, 111-125). The Persians were not especially interested in governing Egypt. They saw it, in the main, as territory through which valuable trade out to the oases and across North Africa flowed.

Persian imperial rule of Egypt continued the well-developed state and local administrative organization and practices (Briant 2002, 413-421; Johnson 1994). “In general,” Ray (1987, 79) concludes, “the Persians seem to have governed Egypt with as light a hand as possible, relying on strategically placed garrisons and a good network of intelligence.” Given the size of the Persian empire, a basic continuity of institutions and traditions is unsurprising. Memphis served as the seat of the satrap and the state treasury, the overseer of which was at least at times an Egyptian (Lloyd 1983, 334). The Persian tributary system relied on the local elite to raise the required tribute. Darius seems to have centralized the tributary system to great effect (Briant 2002, 413-415).

One of the texts recorded on the verso of the *Demotic Chronicle*, an important historical source for the period, reports Cambyses’s attempt at limited restructuring of some temples’ finances, a move paralleled later by Xerxes and widely unpopular among the priesthoods (Felber 2002). It may have been little more than an attempt at centralizing revenue, but the reaction to it, at least the literary reaction to it, was harsh. Cambyses, deservedly so or not, had a bad press that in later traditions became synonymous with foreign invasion and reflects how bitterly the Persian invasion was viewed by at least

some elements of the Egyptian priesthood (Devauchelle 1995). Put in broader historical terms, Egyptians generally despised (p. 83) Asiatic rulers in control of the Nile valley, and the Persians were no doubt viewed by some as merely the latest in a line that began with the Hyksos invasion in the eighteenth century BCE and continued with the brief Assyrian incursion in the seventh century and, finally, the invasions of Cambyses and Artaxerxes. The Ptolemies would learn the lesson of the value of a good press by the use of pharaonic imagery and behavior, and surely they played off of this anti-Persian feeling.

Persian governance relied on the Saite fiscal structure, and Memphis remained the seat of governance. Donations to the temples continued, and Darius's respect toward Egyptian kingship and the Egyptian gods is demonstrated in the famous biography of the Egyptian official Udjahorresnet (Verner 1989), in the Tell el-Maskhuteh stela recording Darius's construction of a canal (Bresciani 1998; Lloyd 2007, 99–104), and in the pious donation of land to the Horus temple at Edfu (Manning 2003, 74–79). In other respects, Persian rule left Egyptian institutions intact. The Persian king granted land to soldiers and administrators throughout Egypt (Briant 2002, 417–418), an ancient practice that would also be continued by the Ptolemies.

Persian rule in Egypt may have been broadly accepted, but there were revolts throughout the period. These were probably the result of Greek involvement with certain elite families in Egypt that made for good bedfellows in opposition to Persian rule. Others may have merely been opportunistic.

The Ptolemies (332–30 BCE)

The Ptolemaic state was the longest lasting of the Hellenistic “successor” states. The territorial size of the Ptolemaic state, including external possessions, was roughly equivalent of the New Kingdom at its height. Demographic levels are disputed, but it seems a reasonably good supposition that the population in Egypt reached its height in Ptolemaic and early Roman times, concomitant with intensification of production and new irrigation machines.

At its height in the early third century BCE, the Ptolemies controlled a “maximum stable territory” (Taagepera 1979) of slightly under one-quarter that of the Seleukid empire, and had a population of, perhaps, a little more than one-quarter the Seleukid kingdom at its height. The bureaucracy that was established in the third century BCE built on ancient administrative practice, although the shift to the use of the Greek language at all levels of the bureaucracy was an important change. The new administrative framework was not simply imposed from above in a single moment but, rather, evolved over the course of a century out of the specific aims of the new Ptolemaic kings sitting in Alexandria. The Ptolemies looked to the New Kingdom pharaohs, the great military conquerors, for inspiration. Egyptian history was used to justify, and to broadcast, Ptolemaic rule.

Ptolemaic strategy was similar to that of other “bureaucratic empires.” It sought to decrease independent power and thus reduce “committed resources” (p. 84) that were embedded within traditional social structures (Eisenstadt 1993, 118). It is difficult to directly compare mobilization during the New Kingdom and the Ptolemaic period; war was a major part of state activity in both periods. At the same time, it sought to increase the surplus the king could control, to create, in other words, what Eisenstadt has called “free-floating resources.” Much of it was spent on external wars, particularly during the third century BCE. The diversion of resources away from local needs to central state ones, among which war-making must count as the major driver in the third century BCE, caused resistance and rebellion that at least on one occasion posed a major threat to Ptolemaic sovereignty within Egypt.

A different political dynamic obtained within the Ptolemaic state, driven by (1) a new bureaucratic structure, administered in Greek; (2) a professional army installed on the land throughout Egypt; and (3) the growth of Greek urban centers. Temples remained in nominal control of their temple estates, and landholding within the estates continued (Manning 2003). The priesthood and temple of Ptah at Memphis was the main center of state religious life, even after the court moved to the new capital at Alexandria. For this reason, it was the location of several Egypt-wide synods (Thompson 1988). In Upper Egypt, several important temples were completely rebuilt, beginning with that of Horus of Edfu in 237 BCE. Egyptian temples continued to be important institutions that were actively supported by the new regime throughout the state. Settlement patterns and the founding of new towns reflected the economic and political aims of the new Greek regime (Mueller 2006). A household census was established, although it is uncertain what its frequency was (Clarysse and Thompson 2006).

Kingship and Administration

Ancient Egypt was a king-centered state, but there were other power-holding institutions such as temples that were part of the state. One of the hallmarks in the history of the Egyptian state is its flexibility as well as the persistence of royal ideology and symbolism (Assmann 2002). The king remained at the center of state ideology, and political power, down through the Ptolemaic period. The king was the font of law by royal decree and the center of state religion. The institution was personal, the king being always mobile, and he enforced control over state institutions by his relationships with officials throughout the country (Kemp 1983, 215). Beneath the surface forms of royal image and ritual, however, lay tremendous change in royal practice that reflected real social change. We rarely hear of political disturbances or revolts until the first millennium BCE. Their absence may simply be due to the nature of the stylized, state-centered evidence. The periods of famine and violence in the intermediate periods that are described in later literary texts are also, no doubt, exaggerated state-centered expressions of the ideal Egyptian polity. (p. 85) There were considerable adjustments to state institutions forced

by the varying demands placed on local production caused by state centralization cycles (Butzer 1980; Kemp 2006, 334). The king as military leader and conqueror during the New Kingdom, for example, reflects the needs of imperial conquest as well as its associated ideological framework.

State intervention in local structures, village governance for example, was probably minimal (Lehner 2000; Trigger 2003). Mann's explanation (1986, 110) for the formation of centralized control is that there were no "overlapping" social networks, a product of the Egyptian Nile geography that generated local networks around basin irrigation systems. There was very little opportunity for coalitions to form that could serve as a counterweight to the king. Revolts against the state in periods of central authority are virtually unknown.

The pharaonic state was flexible and adaptive to the dynamic environment caused by a variable water supply (Butzer 1980). The large amount of local autonomy, as Trigger (2003, 208) correctly stresses, was cheaper in terms of enforcement costs than a highly centralized system, but it came at the price of potential political fragmentation, and it left the ruler dependent on the flow of accurate information from a bureaucratic elite who were not always loyal. Religion was a two-edged sword, providing the ruler "access to local society" (Crone 2003, 79) but also creating "horizontal linkages" (Crone 2003, 71) that could potentially undermine state authority. The division of the state into administrative districts called "nomes" was an important link between villages and the royal court. By the New Kingdom, it was standard to administer the country by dividing it into two administrative halves, centered at Memphis and Thebes. The Ptolemaic pattern of governance mirrors this, but with two Greek poleis, Alexandria and Ptolemais.

The biennial cattle census was established in the Old Kingdom and was used as the basis of state taxation. Information on the process of census taking is slight until the Ptolemaic period when the household census, of unknown frequency, was established. It is clear that land and animals as well as persons, by occupation, were probably counted on some kind of regular basis. Land was surveyed each year once the conditions of water and the crops were known. A cadastral survey of land was performed when changes to the landscape after a disruptive flood, for example, occurred. Local records offices based in the nome capitals kept track of the ownership of land, and nome officials were responsible for assessing and collecting land taxes.

Trigger (2003) distinguished two types of control in territorial states. The first type, delegational (or "segmentary") systems, were those that placed an official and his associates in charge of a region. In bureaucratic systems, the second type of governance structure, a hierarchy of officials was put in charge of specific portfolios. Egypt has been generally thought of as a bureaucratic state, but there were also elements of the delegational system as well. There was considerable evolution. Bureaucracy evolved from a system that was staffed by members of the royal family in the Old Kingdom and was designed to support the royal household and the maintenance of power to a much larger institutionalized structure by the New Kingdom. Controlling, recruiting, and maintaining

Egypt

the loyalty of officials (p. 86) remained problematic in Egypt as in other ancient bureaucracies. It is interesting to note that, as far as we know, Egypt never developed a civil service examination system, with its complex hierarchy, as was done in China or in British India, nor, apparently, did Egypt develop an ideological “code of conduct” (Deng 1999, 121) equivalent to Confucianism by which the scribal elite were bound together.

Urbanization

Egypt has often been considered unique among early states in lacking cities, with the capital at Memphis being the only significant city before Thebes became an important place in the Middle Kingdom and an imperial center in the early New Kingdom. That view was driven by the examination of the textual evidence (Wilson 1960). This is no longer the accepted point of view, although the “urban character of Bronze Age Egypt is not unanimously acknowledged” (O’Connor 1993). The issues remain complex in Egypt with respect to the role of towns, their typology, their characteristics, and even their location. To be sure Egyptian towns should not be imagined as nucleated settlements in the manner of medieval European towns (O’Connor 1993). The divide between “urban” and “rural” was never as sharp. During periods of strong centralization, the state no doubt had an effect both negative and positive on the decline or growth of towns. Some old urban centers declined with the rise of the centralized state, particularly those that arose at trade nodes. Bietak (1979, 129) noted the effect in the eastern Delta.

On the other hand, state-directed construction, at the Old Kingdom pyramid sites for example, or at the new capital at Amarna built in the early New Kingdom, was stimulated by state activity. At times nomarchs may also have been involved in “urban development.” Renewal of interest in urban archaeology since 1972 has provided good data for the character of Egyptian urbanization (Bietak 1979; O’Connor 1993). Archaeological survey work has, however, confirmed the existence of many other significant-sized towns already in the early dynastic period (Naqada, Hierakonpolis), and many towns throughout the Nile valley of approximately 2,000 persons are documented. Some urbanization has been missed because it was part of temple complexes, Medinet Habu in western Thebes in the New Kingdom being a well-documented example. In other cases, ancient towns lie underneath modern ones, thus creating lacunae in the archaeological evidence (Bietak 1979).

The important geographic divisions of the country were the “nomes” or districts that functioned as the centers of tax collection, local administration, and the center of labor mobilization. There were, ideally, forty-two such nomes, twenty in the Delta and twenty-two in Upper Egypt. The actual number varied over the course of Egyptian history. Each nome had a capital town averaging between two and three thousand persons. Up to half of local grain production was sent through (p. 87) these administrative centers to the capital (Hassan 1993), producing a distribution of wealth as follows: inhabitants in the capital, seven to fifteen times that of an agricultural producer and two-and-a-half to five times that of a nome official (Hassan 1993, 565). The number of nomes, and the ability of the king to appoint loyal nomarchs at the head of each district, varied over time. These officials were part of local families that wielded much independent power. The establishment and location of nome centers was an important aspect of centralized control of rural production. The nome centers were founded at a certain distance from each other, on average about one day’s donkey walk it appears (Hassan 1993, 566).

Important urban centers were often located around the major temples. Such temple towns, perhaps distinctive to Egypt (Bietak 1979, 131), were major centers of administration and economic activity. We don't have to conclude, therefore, that the "state" took the place of "cities" as the main motor of the economy. Rather, the temples, as an integral part of the state, were the main motor of the economy, at least in centralized periods of control.

Temples

Egyptian temples were a key development of economic and ideological power in the state. Although debates have raged over the legal status of temples, they were in fact part of the state (O'Connor 1995). Ptolemaic activity to incorporate temples into the new state shows how important it was that temples, their priesthoods, and their assets continued to function as a major sector of the state. By the New Kingdom the larger temples controlled vast tracts of land and large numbers of personnel attached to these estates. The storage capacities of the major temples were crucial aspects of local economies, allowing surplus to be stored up and distributed when needed. The pattern continued through the Ptolemaic period but it is doubtful that the redistributive economic function of the temples, apart from the priesthoods receiving income, obtained in the first millennium BCE. Other aspects of the temples, their strategic locations, market activity, the administrative function contained in them, and their grain storage capacity, suggest that temples were the most important local forces not only of state ideology and legitimizing religious ritual and annual festivals (some of which were massive and took place over periods of weeks annually) but also of economic activity. Temples drew income from production on their endowed lands and also from other activities such as cloth manufacture and pasturage. These products were initially "donated" as offerings to the local gods but were in turn divided into "shares" to be consumed by temple personnel (Haring 1997, 79-81).

It is not easy to describe a history of temples across the periods covered in this article; it is the New Kingdom and Ptolemaic temples that offer the best (p. 88) evidence. An important aspect of the New Kingdom temples is that they received a large portion of war booty from the military campaigns of the kings as offerings. The main state temple of the New Kingdom, that of Amun-Re at Karnak, the imperial divinity par excellence, received the bulk of this booty, and became so dominant in its region that it developed into the center of a theocratic state after the collapse of the New Kingdom. The enormous landed estates of temples like Amun-Re were in part, during the New Kingdom, farmed by prisoners of war and in part leased out to state servants, from priests to soldiers, including foreign mercenaries and scribes. There was no equivalent, no state imperial deity, in the later periods of Egyptian history. The Ptolemaic state took over many of the economic functions of the temple by creating state banks and state granaries.

Law and Legal Institutions

An overview of the Egyptian legal traditions deserves its own volume (Lippert 2008). There was no independent judiciary in Egypt, and no distinction between administrative and legal functions of state officials was made. Ideals of justice were well established in literary texts, in the tomb biographies of officials and in the expressed ideology of kingship as protector as “justice.” The concepts of “law” and “justice” are intimately associated with the proper behavior of kings and were embedded in every royal ritual. They were also a frequent theme in literary portrayals of the “good king.” The “Duties of the Vizier” recorded in the tomb of the New Kingdom official Rekhmire provides a detailed account of the expectations of royal administration, the structure of the administration of justice, and the meting out of justice. To a certain extent the practice of a state official overseeing justice must have existed in earlier periods, and the actual origins of the “Duties of the Vizier” dates back to the Middle Kingdom. A hierarchy was developed by the New Kingdom that divided the country into two halves, with lower “councils” responsible for local affairs, both criminal and civil disputes.

Obtaining justice for private wrongs, however, was contingent, depending on patronage of an official and often a large dose of patience. Private disputes were often settled informally in the village by elders or between representatives of the families involved. Throughout Egyptian history, enforcement remained a serious problem, and confession to a crime was an essential element of guilt-finding.

The use of private written instruments for conveyance of property, by will or by sale, began to be developed in the Old Kingdom. The concept of private property existed in all periods. In the first millennium there evolved significant changes to the law of contracts (Menu). The demotic language and script was developed and spread in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. With its use came a wide array of private contract types. Local registry offices recorded the private holding of land as well as private agreements.

(p. 89) Conclusion

The study of Egypt’s history in the long run shows the complexities of the interplay between local and centralized political institutions. The role of the king was always central to the state system, including the coordination of tax collection and the system of justice, but the flood recession agriculture characteristic of the Nile basin created a bottom-heavy social structure based on local irrigation networks and agricultural conditions. In periods of centralized control, the state could direct the founding of new settlements and the creation of new arable land, but the power to mobilize resources, especially military resources, was limited, as was innovation after the development of

chariot technology in the New Kingdom. Egypt was hardly static throughout its history, but political dominance of the Nile valley by outsiders must in fact be incorporated as a part of, not a break from, the earlier patterns of Egyptian history.

References

Allen, J. P. 2004. *The Heqanakht Papyri*. New York.

Assmann, J. 2002. *The mind of Egypt: History and meaning in the time of the pharaohs*. New York.

Baines, J., and N. Yoffee. 1998. "Order, legitimacy, and wealth in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia." In G. M. Feinman and J. Marcus, eds., *Archaic states*, 199–260. Santa Fe, NM.

Bard, K. A., and R. Fattovich. 2007. Harbor of the pharaohs to the land of Punt: Archaeological investigations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, Egypt, 2001–2005. Naples.

Bell, B. 1971. "The dark ages in ancient history I: The first dark age in Egypt." *American Journal of Archaeology* 75: 1–26.

———. 1975. "Climate and the history of Egypt: The Middle Kingdom." *American Journal of Archaeology* 79: 223–269.

Bernard, A., and O. Masson. 1957. "Les inscriptions grecques d'Abou Simbel." *Revue des Études Grecques* 70: 1–20.

Bietak, M. 1979. "Urban archaeology and the 'town problem' in ancient Egypt." In K. Weeks, ed., *Egyptology and the social sciences*, 97–144. Cairo.

Bokovenko, N. A. 2004. "Migrations of early nomads of the Eurasian steppe in a context of climatic changes." In E. M. Scott et al., eds., *Impact of the environment on human migration in Eurasia*, 21–33. Dordrecht.

Bonneau, D. 1993. *Le Régime administratif de l'eau du Nil dans l'Égypte grecque, romaine et byzantine*. Leiden.

Bourriau, J. 2000. "The Second Intermediate Period." In I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Egypt*, 172–206. Oxford.

Bresciani, E. 1998. "L'Egitto achemenide: Dario I e il canale del mar Rosso." *Transeuphratène* 14: 103–111.

Bresson, A. 2005. "Naukratis: De l'emporion à la cite." *Topoi* 12–13: 133–155.

Briant, P. 2002. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A history of the Persian empire*. Winona Lake, IN.

(p. 90) ———. 2006. "Montesquieu, Mably et Alexandre le grand: Aux sources de l'histoire hellénistique." *Revue Montesquieu* 8: 151–185.

Butzer, K. W. 1976. *Early hydraulic civilization in Egypt: A study in cultural ecology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1980. "Long-term Nile flood variation and political discontinuities in pharaonic Egypt." In J. D. Clark and S. A. Brandt, eds., *The causes and consequences of food production in Africa*, 1–36. Berkeley, CA.

———. 1996. "Irrigation, raised fields and state management: Wittfogel redux." *Antiquity* 70: 200–204.

———. 1999. "Irrigation." In K. A. Bard, ed., *Encyclopedia of the archaeology of ancient Egypt*, 381–382. London.

———. 2008. "Other perspectives on urbanism: Beyond the disciplinary boundaries." In J. Marcus and J. A. Sabloff, eds., *The ancient city: New perspectives on urbanism in the old and new world*, 77–92. Santa Fe, NM.

Clarysse, W., and D. J. Thompson. 2006. *Counting the people in Hellenistic Egypt*. 2 vols. Cambridge.

Crone, P. 2003. *Pre-industrial societies: Anatomy of the premodern world*. Oxford.

Deng, G. 1999. *Premodern Chinese economy: Structural equilibrium and capitalist sterility*. London.

Devauchelle, D. 1995. "Les sentiments anti-perses chez les anciens égyptiens." *Transeuphratène* 9: 67–80.

Dothan, T., and M. Dothan 1992. *People of the Sea: The search for the Philistines*. New York.

Eisenstadt, S. N. 1993 [1963]. *The political systems of empires*. New Brunswick, NJ.

Ekholm, K., and J. Friedman. 1979. "'Capital,' imperialism and exploitation in ancient world systems." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 41–58. Copenhagen.

El-Masry, I. 2004. *Die Soziogenese des altägyptischen Staates in komparativer Perspektive: Ein Beitrag zur politische Ökonomie gesellschaftlicher Herrschaft*. Frankfurt.

Eyre, C. J. 1994. "The water regime for orchards and plantations in pharaonic Egypt." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 80: 57–80.

———. 2000. "Pouvoir central et pouvoirs locaux: Problèmes historiographiques et méthodologiques." In B. Menu, ed., *Égypte pharaonique: Déconcentration, cosmopolitisme*. *Méditerranées* 24:15–39. Paris.

Felber, H. 2002. "Die demotische Chronik." In A. Blasius and B. U. Schipper, eds., *Apokalyptik und Ägypten: Eine kritische Analyse der relevanten Texte aus dem griechisch-römischen Ägypten*, 65–111. Leuven.

Frandsen, P. J. 1979. "Egyptian imperialism." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 167–190. Copenhagen.

Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca, NY.

Gozzoli, R. B. 2006. *The writing of history in ancient Egypt during the first millennium BC (ca. 1070–180 BC): Trends and perspectives*. London.

Gnirs, A. M. 1996. *Militär und Gesellschaft: Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte des Neuen Reiches*. Heidelberg.

———. 1999. "Ancient Egypt." In K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein, eds., *War and society in the ancient and medieval worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, 71–104. Washington, DC.

Grajetzki, W. 2006. *The Middle Kingdom of ancient Egypt: History, archaeology and society*. London.

(p. 91) Haring, B. J. J. 1997. *Divine households: Administrative and economic aspects of the New Kingdom royal memorial temples in western Thebes*. Leiden.

Harrison, T. 2003. "Upside down and back to front: Herodotus and the Greek encounter with Egypt." In R. Matthews and C. Roemer, eds., *Ancient perspectives on Egypt*. London.

Hassan, F. A. 1993. "Town and village in ancient Egypt: Ecology, society and urbanization." In T. Shaw, P. Sinclair, B. Andah, and A. Okpoko, eds., *The archaeology of Africa: Food, metals and towns*, 551–569. London.

———. 1994. "Population ecology and civilization in ancient Egypt." In C. L. Crumley, ed., *Historical ecology: Cultural knowledge and changing landscapes*, 155–182. Santa Fe, NM.

Hayes, W. C. 1955. *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum*. New York.

Helck, W. 1939. *Der Einfluß der Militärführer in der 18. Ägyptischen Dynastie*. Leipzig.

Hendrickx, S., and P. Vermeersch. 2003. Prehistory: From Paleolithic to the Badarian Culture (c. 700,000–4000 BC)." In I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford history of ancient Egypt*, 16–40. Oxford.

Hicks, J. 1969. *A theory of economic history*. Oxford.

Issar, A. S. 2003. *Climate changes during the Holocene and their impact on hydrological systems*. Cambridge.

Issar, A., and M. Zohar. 2004. *Climate change: Environment and civilization in the Middle East*. Berlin.

James, T. G. H. 1991. "Egypt: The twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth dynasties." In *Cambridge ancient history*. 2nd ed. Vol. 3, part 2, 677–747. Cambridge.

Jansen, H. L. 1950. *The Coptic story of Cambyses' invasion of Egypt*. Oslo.

Johnson, J. H. 1994. "The Persians and continuity of Egyptian culture." In Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Amélie Kuhrt, and Margaret Cool Root, eds., *Achaemenid history VIII. Continuity and change. Proceedings of the Last Achaemenid History Workshop* (held in Ann Arbor, MI, spring 1990), 149–159. Leiden.

Kemp, B. J. 1978. "Imperialism and empire in New Kingdom Egypt (c. 1575–1087 **BC**)." In P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, eds., *Imperialism in the ancient world*, 7–57. Cambridge.

———. 1983. "Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, c. 2686–1551 **BC**." In B. G. Trigger, B. J. Kemp, D. O'Connor, and A. B. Lloyd, eds., *Ancient Egypt: A social history*, 71–182. Cambridge.

———. 2006. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a civilization*. 2nd ed. London.

Kitchen, K. A. 1986. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, 1100–650 B.C.* Warminster.

Klemm, R., and D. D. Klemm. 1994. "Chronologischer Abriss der antiken Goldgewinnung in der Ostwüste Ägyptens." *Mitteilungen der Deutscher Archäologischer Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 50: 189–222.

Leahy, A. 1985. "The Libyan period in Egypt: an essay in interpretation." *Libyan Studies* 16: 51–65.

Lehner, M. 2000. "Fractal house of pharaoh: Ancient Egypt as a complex adaptive system, a trial formulation." In T. Kohler and G. Gumerman, eds., *Dynamics in human and primate societies: Agent-based modeling of social and spatial processes*, 275–353. Oxford.

Lippert, S. L. 2008. *Einführung in die altägyptische Rechtsgeschichte*. Münster.

Littauer, M. A., and J. H. Crouwel. 1996. "The origins of the true chariot." *Antiquity* 70: 934–939.

(p. 92) ———. 2002. *Selected writings on chariots, other early vehicles, riding and harness*. Leiden.

Lloyd, A. B. 1983. "Egypt 664-323." In B. Trigger et al., eds., *Ancient Egypt: A social history*, 279-348, 359-364, 412-427. Cambridge.

———. 1988. *Herodotus Book 2*. Vol. 3. Leiden.

———. 2000. "The Saite navy." In G. J. Oliver, R. Brock, T. J. Cornell, and S. Hodkinson, eds., *The sea in antiquity*, 81-91. Oxford.

———. 2003. "The Late Period (664-332 **BC**)." In I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 364-387. Oxford.

———. 2007. "Darius I and Egypt: Suez and Hibis." In C. Tuplin, ed., *Persian responses: Political and cultural interaction with(in) the Achaemenid empire*, 99-115. Swansea, UK.

Mann, M. 1986. *The sources of social power*. Vol. 1. Cambridge.

Manning, J. G. 2002. "Irrigation et État en Égypte antique." *Annales, histoire, sciences sociales* 57: 611-623.

———. 2003. *Land and power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The structure of land tenure*. Cambridge.

———. 2010. *The last pharaohs: Egypt under the Ptolemies 305-30BC*. Princeton, NJ.

Morris, I., ed. 1994. *Classical Greece: Ancient histories and modern archaeologies*. Cambridge.

Mueller, K. 2006. *Settlements of the Ptolemies: City foundations and new settlement in the Hellenistic world*. Leuven.

Müller-Wollermann, R. 1986. *Krisenfaktoren im ägyptischen Staat des ausgehenden Alten Reiches*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen.

O'Connor, D. 1983. "New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period 1552-664 **BC**." In B. G. Trigger, B. J. Kemp, D. O'Connor, and A. B. Lloyd, eds., *Ancient Egypt: A social history*, 183-278. Cambridge.

———. 1993. "Urbanism in Bronze Age Egypt and northeast Africa." In T. Shaw, P. Sinclair, B. Andah, and A. Okpoko, eds., *The archaeology of Africa: Food, metals and towns*, 570-586. London.

———. 1995. "The social and economic organization of ancient Egyptian temples." In J. M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 319-329. Peabody, MA.

O'Leary, B. 1989. *The Asiatic mode of production: Oriental despotism, historical materialism and Indian history*. Explorations in Social Structures. Oxford.

Parcak, S. H. 2008. "Site survey in Egyptology." In R. H. Wilkinson, ed., *Egyptology today*, 57-76. Cambridge.

Posener, G. 1936. *La première domination perse enÉgypte*. Cairo.

Ray, J. 1987. "Egypt: Dependence and independence (425–343 B.C.)." In Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, ed., *Achaemenid history*, vol. 1: *Sources, structures and synthesis. Proceedings of the Groningen 1983 Achaemenid history workshop*, 79–95. Leiden.

———. 1988. "Egypt 525–404 B.C." In J. Boardman, N. G. L. Hammond, D. M. Lewis, and M. Ostwald, eds., *"The Persian Empire": Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean C. 525 to 479 B.C.*, 254–286. Cambridge.

———. 1994. "Literacy and language in Egypt in the late and Persian periods." In Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and power in the ancient world*, 51–66. Cambridge.

Ryholt, K. S. B. 1997. *The political situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*. Copenhagen.

(p. 93) Sandor, B. I. 2004. "Tutankhamun's chariots: Secret treasures of engineering mechanics." *Fatigue and Fracture of Engineering Materials and Structures* 27: 637–646.

Schenkel, W. 1978. *Die Bewässerungsrevolution im AltenÄgypten*. Mainz.

Shaw, I. 2001. "Egyptians, Hyksos and military technology: Causes, effects or catalysts?" In A. J. Shortland, ed., *The social context of technological change: Egypt and the Near East, 1650–1550BC*, 59–71. Oxford.

Smith, S. T., 1995. *Askut in Nubia: The economics and ideology of Egyptian imperialism in the second millenniumBC*. London.

———. 1997. "State and empire in the Middle and New Kingdoms." In J. Lustig, ed., *Anthropology and Egyptology: A developing dialogue*, 66–89. Sheffield.

Spalinger, A. J. 2005. *War in ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom*. Oxford.

Strudwick, N. 1985. *The administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom: The highest titles and their holders*. London.

Taagepera, R. 1978. "Size and duration of empires: Growth-decline curves, 3000 to 600 BC." *Social Science Research* 7: 180–196.

———. 1979. "Size and duration of empires: Growth-decline curves, 600 BC–600 AD." *Social Science History* 3, nos. 3–4: 115–138.

Thompson, D. J. 1988. *Memphis under the Ptolemies*. Princeton, NJ.

Trigger, B. G. 1979. "Egypt and the comparative study of early civilizations." In K. Weeks, ed., *Egyptology and the social sciences*, 23–56. Cairo.

———. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations: A comparative study*. Cambridge.

Egypt

- Turchin, P., and S. A. Nefedov. 2009. *Secular cycles*. Princeton, NJ.
- Valbelle, D. 1998. *Histoire de l'Etat pharaonique*. Paris.
- Van den Boorn, G. P. F. 1988. *The duties of the vizier: Civil administration in the early New Kingdom*. London.
- Van de Mieroop, M. 2007. *A history of the ancient Near East ca. 3000–323BC*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA.
- Vermeersch, P. M., E. Paulissen, S. Stokes, C. Charlier, P. Van Peer, C. Stringer, and W. Lindsay. 1998. "A middle Paleolithic burial of a modern human at Taramsa Hill, Egypt." *Antiquity* 72: 475–485.
- Verner, M. 1989. La Tombe d'Oudjahorresnet et le Cimetière saïto-perse d'Abousir. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 89: 283–290.
- Warburton, D. 1997. *State and economy in ancient Egypt: Fiscal vocabulary of the New Kingdom*. Fribourg.
- Weeks, K., ed. 1979. *Egyptology and the social sciences*. Cairo.
- Wenke, R. J. 2009. *The ancient Egyptian state: The origins of Egyptian culture (c. 8000–2000BC)*. Cambridge.
- Wilkinson, E. 2000. *Chinese history: A manual*. Rev and enlarged ed. Cambridge, MA.
- Wilkinson, T. A. H. 2000a. *Early dynastic Egypt*. London.
- . 2000b. *Royal annals of ancient Egypt: The Palermo Stone and its associated fragments*. London.
- Wilson, J. A. 1960. "Egypt through the New Kingdom: Civilization without cities." In C. H. Kraeling. and R. Mc. Adams, eds., *City invincible*, 124–136. Chicago.
- Wittfogel, K. 1957. *Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power*. New Haven, CT.
- Zibelius-Chen, K., 1988. *Dieägyptischen Expansion nach Nubia: Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren*. Wiesbaden.

Notes:

(1.) Dates used here are from Shaw 2003, 481–489. Sections of this chapter appeared in earlier forms in Manning 2002; 2010. I am grateful to Thomas Schneider for reading a draft and for offering suggestions for improvement.

Egypt

Joseph G. Manning

Joseph G. Manning took his doctorate in Egyptology at the University of Chicago. He taught at the University of Chicago, Princeton, and Stanford before taking up his current position as the William K. and Marilyn M. Simpson Professor of Classics and Ancient History at Yale.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Steven J. Garfinkle

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Middle Eastern Languages and Culture, Greek and Roman Law,
Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0004

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the formation of city-states in the Fertile Crescent. It provides a working definition of city-state in both spatial and social terms, and describes the city-state, focusing on the historical periods of early Mesopotamia. The chapter also considers the ideology of the city-state, the administration of an integrated economy, the emergence of kingship and institutions of government, and the replacement of the city-state system with territorial kingdoms.

Keywords: city-states, Fertile Crescent, early Mesopotamia, ideology, integrated economy, kingship, institutions of government, territorial kingdoms

Introduction

In most standard introductions to world history, we learn that civilization began in the city-states of the ancient Near East. The urban revolution that took place in fourth millennium BCE Mesopotamia was one of the few examples of the pristine development of complex civilization and its attendant characteristics, such as the rise of the state. My goal is to analyze the nature and operation of the city-state in the ancient Near East. The enduring significance of these urban centers throughout later antiquity adds to the value of this study. As we will see in the final section of this chapter, the development of the territorial and regional polities that replaced city-states did not do away with the “city-centered” view of the populace. Moreover, the centers of power in those great kingdoms, such as Babylon and Assyria, were the previously independent city-states of our era.

My discussion of city-states in the ancient Near East is divided into the following sections. In the next section, I define the city-state in both social and spatial terms. The following section is devoted to a survey of our source material. We are far removed in both time and space from the ancient Near East; therefore it is necessary not only to examine the varied sources for our study but also to understand their limitations. The fourth section is a brief survey of the development of the city-state, especially in the historical periods of early Mesopotamia. The following sections are devoted to discussion of four related aspects of social power: the development of the ideology of the city-state, the appearance of kingship and the institutions of government, the administration of an integrated economy, and (p. 95) the legal and military apparatuses that supported this administration. In the final section, I look at the collapse of the city-state system and the growth of territorial kingdoms in Mesopotamia.

What Is a City-State?

The city-state is defined here as an independent social, economic, and political entity that first appeared in southern Mesopotamia during the “urban revolution” in the fourth millennium BCE. The city-state included an urban core plus its surrounding agricultural hinterland. The walled city was surrounded by suburbs, harbors, orchards, and fields (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 65). The urban center itself was at the top of a hierarchy of smaller settlements, essentially agricultural towns and villages, which clustered around the city and viewed it as both cult center and socioeconomic organizer. The rapid growth of urban centers in the late fourth millennium BCE meant that these cities often relied on the exploitation of rural communities to support the subsistence of city residents who were not engaged in food production (Pollock 2001, 194–195). This distinct combination of settlements was ideally autarkic. Certainly, these cities did not, and could not, exist in isolation; but, as far as subsistence was concerned, they were able to function independently. This was true for the majority of the successful city-states in the ancient Near East in spite of great emphasis placed on “foreign” trade and on competition with neighboring states. Over the long history of the ancient Near East, there were exceptions, and these were usually caravan cities that sat astride important trade routes and were often not as agriculturally independent as other city-states. These settlements were also usually a secondary development responding to the growth of neighboring city-state systems.

City-states most often were not culturally distinct but rather existed among a network of otherwise independent city-states that shared a common language, material culture, and religion (Trigger 2008, 56). This was true throughout the Near East in antiquity. The most obvious examples were the Sumerian and Akkadian city-states of southern Mesopotamia, the Canaanite city-states in Syro-Palestine, and later the Phoenician city-states on the Levantine coast. In this respect, the poleis of the Greeks, with which we are often more

familiar, paralleled the earlier Near Eastern city-states. These city-state systems were quite extensive. We can identify at least fifteen major Sumerian city-states and similar numbers for the Canaanites and Phoenicians.

By the beginning of the third millennium BCE, the city-state was the dominant form of political community throughout the Near East. This included the area of the modern Middle East and parts of Turkey and Iran, but it did not include ancient Egypt (for Egypt, see above, chapter 2). In the rain-fed areas of the Fertile Crescent itself, the city-states tended to be more dispersed, while in Mesopotamia (p. 96) we encounter denser clusters of city-states. (The Fertile Crescent is defined here as the arc of land surrounding Mesopotamia that had sufficient rainfall to support dry-farming.)

The city-state in the Near East was a complex polity that usually stood at the center of a cluster of smaller settlements. What additional features separated a city from a village in antiquity? Certainly size was important, but precise demographic information is often unavailable even for well-documented periods of antiquity; and the ancients themselves did not differentiate on the basis of size. In both Sumerian and Akkadian the words for “city” could be used to describe both small towns and mighty urban centers. Without knowing the exact population of these ancient centers, we can propose several criteria for what constituted a city, and hence the core of a city-state, in the ancient Near East: city walls, monumental public architecture, settlement hierarchy, a professional class of craftsmen, and a complex and integrated agrarian economy over which an administrative elite exercised control (Pollock 1999, 46–51).

As we will see below, the origins of these city-states in the Near East lie in periods that began long before the advent of writing. I will discuss these developments, but I will focus most of my attention on the historical periods when we have access to a variety of evidence including both texts and material remains.

Sources for the Study of the Ancient Near Eastern City-State

Our evidence for the city-states of the ancient Near East is rich and diverse, including physical remains, written sources, and, more recently, comparative studies of early communities. The evidence may be copious, but it is also unevenly distributed over time and space. For the earliest periods of city-state formation, we have access exclusively to the archaeological evidence and to anthropological and economic studies of state formation in more recent eras. From the beginning of the third millennium BCE onward we have access to the textual data preserved on clay tablets and stone monuments.

The study of urban centers in the Near East has benefited from both intensive excavation of cities such as Uruk, Ur, and Ugarit and extensive surface surveys. The last two decades

of unrest and disruption in Iraq have also meant that archaeologists have paid increasing attention to the peripheral areas, such as Syria and Anatolia, which had been the focus of less excavation and scholarship.

The texts from the era of city-states, mostly preserved on clay tablets, were written in numerous languages, including Sumerian, Akkadian, and various West Semitic languages such as Eblaite and Ugaritic. The written sources, though they are unevenly preserved, document most of the activities of the urban elite in the (p. 97) city-states of the Near East (on the limits of these sources, see Van De Mieroop 1997b). Unfortunately, the documentary evidence becomes most prolific in the Near East just when the city-states were eclipsed by the formation of larger territorial states. The trickle of texts becomes a torrent by the end of the third millennium BCE. This was not the result of an explosion of literacy but rather a consequence of the rise of the state and the desire to document the various activities it oversaw. Hence, there was a proliferation of literary texts and hymns, many of which extol the virtue of the city and its ruler. We find a complementary rise in the number of royal inscriptions, especially those describing the king's building activities; and, of course, there was tremendous growth in administrative texts relating to the management of the economy and the judicial and military apparatuses of the state.

The biases in our surviving sources are especially relevant to the study of the city-state. Both the ancient literate elite and the modern scholarly investigator have shown a distinct preference for the preservation and study of the urban environment and its concerns. The cities have received the most attention from modern scholars precisely because they stand out so prominently in the archaeological record. Cities are easier to find, they leave behind a more permanent imprint, and they are the source of the magnificent objects that have always attracted more attention. As we will see below, this was also a preference expressed by the ancient residents of the Near East. They focused their resources and attention on the urban environment, and this had a decisive influence on what traces of their civilization have survived (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 1-2).

The Development of City-States in the Near East

Ancient Near Eastern City-States



Map 3.1 Cities of the Ancient Near East, circa 3500–100 BCE.

Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, has long been popularly known as the cradle of civilization. It was in the neighboring regions, however, where there was enough rainfall to support dry-farming, that the first permanent settlements were established in the ancient Near East. Already by the ninth millennium BCE, the

settlement at Jericho had walls. Such walls attest to the development of an economy no longer based entirely on subsistence labor. A surplus existed to allow some labor to be allocated toward the building of the wall. Moreover, an authority existed to determine how and where that wall would be built and by whom. The earliest sedentary communities in the Levant were able to support themselves prior to the agricultural revolution because they were well situated to take advantage of an abundance and variety of local resources in regions where there were numerous wild plant and animal species. Communities like Jericho facilitated the agricultural revolution by making it possible for the residents in the region to become familiar with the local flora and fauna, leading (p. 98) to domestication. Craft specialization became increasingly important during the Neolithic period, leading to significant developments such as the advent of pottery. Archaeological evidence also suggests the early existence of vast trade routes connecting the ancient Near East. Obsidian, a glass-like volcanic rock, was highly desired for making tools and as a decorative item. Modern researchers can determine the specific origins of a particular piece of obsidian. As a result, we know that during the Neolithic period obsidian from ancient Anatolia was traded all over the Near East. Sites like Jericho and Chatal Huyuk, an Anatolian settlement of the later Neolithic period, grew in size to between 7 to 15 hectares and supported populations in excess of a thousand people. Of course, these were not yet cities as we have defined them above.

By the end of the sixth millennium BCE there were towns and villages spread across the Near East. The settlement patterns were similar across the region as well. As the adoption of farming and animal husbandry became more widespread, settlements appeared of increasing size and complexity. This was especially true in Mesopotamia beginning in the Ubaid period (Table 3.1). Increasing social complexity and improved technological abilities were hallmarks of the Ubaid communities in Mesopotamia. At the same time, most of these sites, like those in surrounding areas of the Near East, were no larger than 10 to 15 hectares in size.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Mesopotamia, where large cities first began to appear in the fourth millennium BCE, was characterized by two broadly different environmental zones (see Map 3.1). In southern Mesopotamia, roughly from the area of modern Baghdad down to the marshy delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, we find a broad, flat alluvial plain. (p. 99) In that zone, which would later be traversed by the numerous canals built by the Sumerians and Babylonians, there is no appreciable rainfall, and all farming must be assisted by irrigation. The topography also meant that the river channels could rapidly shift their course over the plain. In southern Mesopotamia there were three complementary ecological zones: irrigated land, which could produce enormous farming yields; desert steppe, which was used to graze vast herds of sheep and goats; and marshland, which yielded reeds, fish, and waterfowl. Due to the area’s topography, the relationship between these zones was not fixed and there was tremendous variability over short distances of both time and space. The archaeologist Elizabeth Stone has described this environment for the city of Nippur:

These three different ecological niches should not be thought of as distinct zones but rather were interlocking. The land is so flat that there are few geographical factors that dictate their location. The site of Nippur was in the midst of a marsh when it was first excavated by the University of Pennsylvania in the 1890s, was surrounded by desert in the mid-1970s, and is within the cultivated zone today, and this situation is typical for much of Iraq. (Stone 2005, 143)

Table 3.1 Standard Periodization of Early Mesopotamia

Name	Years BCE
Ubaid Period	6000–4200
Uruk Period	
Early/Middle Uruk	4200–3300
Late Uruk	3300–3100
Jemdet Nasr	3100–2900
Early Dynastic Period	
Early Dynastic I	2900–2750
Early Dynastic II	2750–2600
Early Dynastic III	2600–2350

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Dynasty of Akkad	2350-2150
Ur III Period	2112-2004
Old Babylonian Period	
Isin-Larsa Dynasties	2000-1800
First Dynasty of Babylon	1800-1600

These complementary zones allowed for a richness of agricultural development, and the variety of resources available for subsistence tended to alleviate short-term seasonal instability in one or the other of these agricultural regimes. (p. 100) Of course, outside of this ecological diversity, southern Mesopotamia was famously devoid of other natural resources, with no appreciable deposits of metals and little available sturdy wood. Northern Mesopotamia, the area that would later develop into the Assyrian kingdom and empire along the upper Tigris River, lay within the dry-farming zone and was characterized by less proximate ecological diversity.

Throughout the sixth and fifth millennia BCE, these two regions of Mesopotamia developed in parallel (Stone 1995; Algaze 2008). Both were home to growing permanent communities in regions that would later develop into strong city-states, especially the areas around Nippur and Uruk in the south and Nineveh in the north. At the end of the Ubaid period this began to change as the size and density of settlements in southern Mesopotamia grew substantially. Ultimately, the urban revolution that took place in southern Mesopotamia was on a scale that dwarfed all earlier settlement patterns in the Near East. This expansion of cities should be imagined in three ways. First, the size of the individual settlements grew exponentially. Second, the number of cities in close proximity to each other increased substantially; in densely populated southern Mesopotamia, the walls of one great city were visible to its closest neighbors. And finally, the percentage of the population that lived within the urban environment expanded tremendously.

Ancient Mesopotamia in the Uruk period has been called the “heartland of cities” (Adams 1981). I have already introduced some of the environmental factors that favored the growth of cities in southern Mesopotamia. These were joined with a number of technological innovations in the Uruk period that led to further growth in these communities. Improvements in irrigation, the use of draft animals to draw seeder plows, and better tools for harvesting and processing grain all allowed for a tremendous growth in productivity in southern Mesopotamia (Liverani 2006, 16-19).

Moreover, the environment continued to shape agricultural innovation in direct ways. In the extreme south in Mesopotamia, the predominant agricultural unit was a long narrow field (Liverani 1997; Liverani 2006, 15-16). These fields, positioned alongside canals, were particularly well suited for irrigation agriculture and for the use of the seeder plow.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

The maintenance of this system of fields required intensive management. This combination of a favorable environment and technological innovations led to increased surpluses that not only allowed for greater craft specialization but also created an increased need for administration. Hence, specifically urban professionals arose, those administrators who managed the growing institutions of the state. This is a category that included priests, military officials, surveyors, judges, accountants, and eventually scribes. Note that I will repeatedly use the term “administrator” in preference to the term “bureaucrat.” This is in recognition of some of the fundamental distinctions between ancient institutional management and more recent notions of rational bureaucracy (Garfinkle 2005; 2008a).

The emerging cities offered a home and a market for farmers and craftsmen, provided a cult center for worship and for ideological identification, and housed an urban elite who organized “public” life and who were dependent on foreign trade goods to represent their high status. These features of urban life had their (p. 101) reflection in both the archaeological and textual records. Moreover, these facets of the early city gave rise to numerous theories about its origins. The most prominent theories stress the role of the city as a ceremonial center, as a hub for trade, as a gathering place for surplus, and as the home for a redistributive authority (Algaze 2008; Liverani 2006; Trigger 2003; Van De Mieroop 1997a).

Regardless of their origins, the growth of city-states in the Near East over the course of the fourth millennium BCE was extraordinary. No doubt, the very proximity of so many cities in the south was a spur to their further development, and there was significant competition among them. By the Late Uruk period, there were cities in central Babylonia, such as Nippur, that approached 50 hectares in size, and the city of Uruk itself had grown to over 100 hectares in area. Including the surrounding settlements, a remarkable number of people were now living in urban centers in southern Mesopotamia. More significantly perhaps, the ideas of the city had spread well beyond that region in a process often labeled as “the Uruk expansion” (Algaze 1993; 2008). This entailed the spread of urban culture to surrounding areas on the Susiana plain (in modern Iran), across the Zagros mountains, and up into Syria and Anatolia. Some of these settlements may have been “colonies” directly inspired by the movement of Mesopotamians into these areas in pursuit of trade goods.

Many of the cities outside of southern Mesopotamia, such as Tell Brak in Syria, had already been established but now took on the characteristics of larger urban centers. By the Late Uruk period, these included monumental architecture, increased and public uses of art and sculpture, complex division of labor, redistributive administrations, and, by the end of the era, writing. We also have evidence for the beginnings of mass production. A feature of sites in the Near East during the Uruk expansion was the appearance of beveled rim bowls. These were shallow, mass-produced clay bowls that appear to have been used for the distribution of rations. Their standardization is a good indicator of centralized administration, and their wide geographic distribution throughout the Near

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

East points to the spread of practices as well as ideas (see Map 2.2 in Van De Mieroop 2007).

The cities of the fourth millennium BCE were administered by city-state governments that arranged for public construction, for the manufacture of items like the beveled rim bowls, and for the distribution of rations. Writing developed in the city of Uruk by the end of the Late Uruk period. The earliest written documents display a concern primarily to store economic information and transfer it across space and time. In order to function effectively, one of the chief requirements of a writing system is its standardization. This is necessary so that a scribe in one part of the city, or in a year's time, will be able to unlock the information recorded by a scribe in another part of the city. Such standardization chiefly arose in the ancient world under the guidance of the great institutions. Therefore, both the presence of writing and the content of the earliest written documents attest to the growth of central authority in the city-states.

The earliest clay tablets record the goods, primarily agricultural produce, that were collected, stored, and distributed in cities like Uruk. At the beginning of the third millennium BCE writing started to appear in adjacent areas like Syria and (p. 102) Iran. The advent of writing also called for the creation of a method for training scribes. These scribes would eventually form the basis for a literate and numerate class of early administrators (Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993; Robson 2007). Among the early cuneiform texts we find lists of signs designed to aid the scribes in their education. These lists are some of our best sources on the early history of state formation. The most expressive of these early texts listed the numerous professions found in the city. The professions were arranged in hierarchical order, informing us about both the division of labor and the division of authority within the city. The topmost position in the early version of the list is not clear to modern scholars, but the later Mesopotamians equated it with their word for kingship. The titles on the list cover numerous areas of authority in the city including justice and agricultural management (Nissen, Damerow, and Englund 1993). Lower down on the list we find gardeners, cooks, potters, and so forth. The list shows the social order for the whole of the city's inhabitants. These lists continued to be copied from the fourth millennium BCE all the way down to the Old Babylonian period in the first half of the second millennium BCE.

Art historical evidence can be used to deduce the same social developments in the Mesopotamian city-states. The Uruk Vase is among the most famous objects from early Mesopotamia and dates to the same era as these early texts (Bahrani 2002). The vase illustrates how individuals were conceived with respect to their environment and to each other. In the lowest three registers, the natural world was depicted in the form of its agricultural bounty, first water, then stalks of grain, and finally pairs of sheep. In the middle register, there is a long line of striding and naked male figures carrying jars and bowls. These were the dependent laborers. In the top register, a variety of clothed officials receive the produce of the community and dedicate that produce to the goddess Inanna, who appears in front of her symbols and who was among the foremost deities in

the city of Uruk. One figure stands out the most since he is a giant among the officials. This figure is assumed to be the leader mentioned at the top of the archaic list of professions.

At the dawn of the historical era, the cities of southern Mesopotamia were already enormous. Again, the best known of these cities through archaeological excavation is Uruk. By the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 2900 BCE), the walls of Uruk surrounded a city of more than 5 square kilometers, more than twice the size of fifth-century BCE Athens (Nissen 1988, 71–72). The physical size of the cities is an obvious testament to their importance, but the level of urbanization by the end of the Uruk period is equally astonishing. Estimates vary, but it appears that between 50 and 80 percent of the population of southern Mesopotamia actually lived in its cities (Algaze 2008, 106). The size of the different city-states could vary tremendously. What was significant for the conception of the city was that it possessed the characteristics identified above, such as a city wall, monumental public architecture, a settlement hierarchy, a professional class of craftsmen, and a complex and integrated agrarian economy over which an administrative elite exercised control. Based on the archaeological record, we are best able to estimate the size of an urban core that was surrounded by a city wall. Hence, in the third millennium BCE, Abu Salabikh was a city of some 20 hectares while Uruk was nearly 500 hectares. Perhaps more normative were cities of between 60 and 75 hectares, like Ur and Mashkan-shapir in the south, and, later on, Shubat-Enlil in the north (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 94–95). We should note that in the later eras of Mesopotamian history, the capitals grew to enormous size, supported by the administrative and transportation systems of the imperial communities of Assyria and Babylonia. The size of the territory of the extraordinary city of Uruk was still rather small in comparative terms, supported by a zone of cultivated fields 14 kilometers wide (Adams 1981, fig. 24). There were a variety of factors that inhibited the territorial growth of city-states in the dry-farming zones of northern Mesopotamia and neighboring Syria, and they were likely limited to a radius of approximately 15 kilometers (Wilkinson 1994).

A good example of the size of these early states was Umma, which had a long and well-documented history as a major city-state in Mesopotamia. We are well informed about the size of Umma when it was incorporated as a province into the kingdom of the Third Dynasty of Ur at the end of the third millennium BCE. The territory of Umma, which included a number of smaller towns and villages, was approximately 2,000 square kilometers, roughly 40 x 50 kilometers (Adams 2008, 6). Umma was a prominent Sumerian city-state and probably among the larger territorial units, though smaller than the neighboring state of Lagash. The territory of Umma was crossed by numerous canals, however, only a fraction of the land was actually brought under active cultivation (Dahl 2007, 36). This highlights the fact that though these states were huddled closely together in Mesopotamia, there was often more than enough available land to support each state. The constraints on the size of these states had more to do with water and labor than with land.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

The Early Dynastic Period was the heyday of the Mesopotamian city-state. This long period witnessed the growth of city-states and the increasing spread of writing. Beginning around 2600 BCE trade and contact increased between the city-states in Mesopotamia and the surrounding areas (Van De Mieroop 2002). The wealth created in these city-states is perhaps most evident in the royal tombs from Early Dynastic Ur. From the same era, we also find textual evidence for the spread of the city-state into other areas of the Near East.

In Syria, the cities of Mari and Ebla display evidence for complex social and political hierarchies, along with writing and extensive archives (see Map 3.1). These early archives already show evidence of highly organized states engaged in significant redistribution of resources through rations.

Our sources also indicate that at least from the middle of the third millennium BC there was a great deal of conflict between the cities in southern Mesopotamia.

Enlil, king of all lands, father of all the gods, by his authoritative command, demarcated the border between Ningirsu and Shara. Mesalim, king of Kish, at the command of Ishtaran, measured it off and erected a monument there. Ush, ruler of Umma, acted arrogantly: he smashed that monument and marched on the plain of Lagash. Ningirsu, warrior of Enlil, at his just command, did battle with Umma. (Cooper 1986, 54–55)

(p. 104) This text documents an episode in what modern scholars have labeled as the Lagash-Umma border conflict. This conflict lasted for approximately 150 years (2500–2350 BCE) and was recounted in numerous sources from Lagash (Cooper 1983). The two cities fought for control of some very fertile land along their border. This conflict was imagined by its participants as playing out among the gods as well. After all, the gods themselves represented their entire cities (Ningirsu for Lagash and Shara for Umma). Kish was a neighboring city-state to the north of Umma and Lagash, in central Babylonia. Clearly, at some point, its king was powerful enough to have acted as an arbitrator and to have established a border between the combatants. He did so at the command of his god, Ishtaran; and, of course, all of the actions were undertaken at the command of Enlil, the head of the Sumerian pantheon who made his home in the city of Nippur. The text captures the hierarchy that the Mesopotamians believed controlled their fates. The city itself was home to a god, and that god sanctioned the actions of the king.

The Sumerian King List, which was drafted toward the end of the long era of city-states, was commissioned by kings who hoped to supplant the ideology of the independent city-state. Most of the “history” documented by the list is set in the Early Dynastic Period, and the text stands out as a monument to the durability of the idea of the city-state. The list created a fictitious history of Mesopotamia in which kingship was always exercised over the whole region by one city. (For a translation, see the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk). This was the case by the latter stages of

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

the third millennium BCE, but it was in no way normative. The kings depicted at the very end of the list did exercise such singular authority, and the text reflected the demise of the independence of the city-states. At the same time, it reinforced the notion of cities as the natural home of power (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 49).

In Mesopotamia the era of the city-state came to a contentious end in the early second millennium BCE after a long period of contest among different dynasties, each aiming to control the whole of southern Mesopotamia. A similar pattern emerged in northern Mesopotamia with the creation kingdoms along the Tigris and in northern Syria. Those northern kingdoms dominated even old city-states such as Mari on the great bend of the Euphrates. Further to the west, however, in coastal Syria and down through Lebanon and Israel, city-states such as Ugarit, Byblos, Hazor, and Megiddo continued to thrive.

Indeed, the city-state survived even as the power of the new territorial kingdoms grew. A famous letter from the eighteenth-century BCE Mari archives illustrates both aspects of this process.

No king is truly powerful on his own. Ten to fifteen kings follow Hammurabi of Babylon, Rim-Sin of Larsa, Ibal-pi-El of Eshnunna or Amut-pi-El of Qatna, and twenty kings follow Yarim-Lim of Yamkhad. (Van De Mieroop 2005)

The letter documents a struggle for hegemony among several strong kings that was enacted through the control of numerous vassal kings, each of whom held power in his own city-state. In fact, the persistence of these city-states and smaller (p. 105) kingdoms in Syro-Palestine helped to foster some of the patterns of the succeeding “international age.” In the Late Bronze Age (1600–1200 BCE), the growing territorial kingdoms of the Near East (Egypt, Babylon, the Hittites, the Mittani, and, eventually, the Assyrians) usually contested control over the space beyond their borders through vassal states that more often than not remained city-states themselves. As we saw with the initial formation of the city-states in southern Mesopotamia, this turn of events was also heavily influenced by topographic and environmental factors.

The city-states of the Levant arose in dry-farming areas in which the cities themselves were more widely dispersed. Moreover, the topography of the Levant, with its mountainous regions and separated river valleys, made it more difficult for local monarchs to effectively create territorial states on anything more than a very small scale. The coastal cities in particular proved difficult to incorporate into larger kingdoms. This was true all the way down to the era of imperialism in the first millennium BCE, when the Phoenician cities, successors to the Canaanite cities of the Bronze Age, retained some measure of their independence even in the face of the might of imperial Assyria. In certain respects, these later city-states may have had a different economic basis than their earlier Mesopotamian predecessors. They were not based on irrigation agriculture, and they were often more consciously geared toward the organization of trade and interstate commerce. At the same time, the operation of these communities, and the

functioning of their governments, remained quite similar to the earlier city-states. Even though they had to negotiate their existence among much larger states, the last city-states of the Near East show the continued influence of the idea of the vibrant and independent urban environment.

The Ideology of Urban Life

Come, I will lead you to Uruk-the Town-Square,
to the sacred temple, the home of Anu!
Enkidu, arise, let me take you
to the temple Eanna, the home of Anu,
where men are engaged in labours of skill,
you, too, *like a man*, will *find a place* for yourself. (George 1999, 12)

With these words from Tablet II of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Shamhat invited Enkidu to follow her to the city of Uruk where he would become the companion of the king. Once there, her words make clear, he will become part of a community, indeed he will be able to fulfill his destiny as a man. As befits the original home of the city-state, ancient Mesopotamia was an urban society and the Mesopotamians developed a city-centered ideology that made possible the complex social developments associated with state formation. The Epic of Gilgamesh comes down to (p. 106) us as an Akkadian composition that achieved its basic form in the early second millennium BCE, as the era of city-states was waning; but it had its antecedents in Sumerian stories about the legendary Gilgamesh that date back into the third millennium BCE and the apogee of the city-states.

The epic privileges those things, baking bread and brewing beer for example, that were crucial aspects of urban life in agrarian Mesopotamia. It is notable that these were also, along with oil and textiles, the primary rations provided by the redistributive administration of the central institutions of the city. Moreover, the process by which Enkidu was civilized can be described as both technological and spatial. He was introduced to the customs of urban society, eating, dressing, and grooming among them, as he was brought into closer proximity to the city itself.

At one point, the epic expressed some reservation about the redemptive qualities of city life. On his deathbed, the hero Enkidu lamented having left behind his carefree existence on the steppe, and he cursed Shamhat for bringing him civilization. The sun god Shamash, deity of justice and judgment, immediately corrected him.

O Enkidu, why curse Shamhat the harlot,
Who fed you bread that was fit for a god,
And poured you ale that was fit for a king,
Who clothed you in a splendid garment,
And gave you as companion the handsome Gilgamesh? (George 1999, 58)

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Our modern notion that the origins of civilization began with the creation of the city would therefore have been quite familiar to an ancient Mesopotamian. To the inhabitants of the ancient Near East, the city was the locus for virtually all significant activity.

The symbolic power of these cities was their ability to provide subsistence and protection. This protection was both human and divine. The city as seat of both secular and divine authority guaranteed its residents safety from an often hostile environment. Within the relatively flat environment in southern Mesopotamia, the cities themselves were the most prominent features of the landscape on the alluvial plain. Visible at great distances, the walls of the cities, and the temples that rose to even greater heights within them, were both landmarks and testaments to human achievement. It is small wonder then that Gilgamesh's greatest achievement, and the guarantee of his elusive immortality, was his building activity (George 1999, 2).

The focal point of the city in the ancient Near East was its cult centers. We also know from the archaeological record that these cult centers remained remarkably fixed in space over time. At the city of Eridu, archaeological investigation has uncovered a series of sixteen temples all built in the same place over a period from the late sixth millennium BCE to the end of the third millennium BCE, when the city was abandoned because of a shift in the course of the Euphrates River. Over this time, the temple grew from one room to a massive ziggurat rising high above the city and the surrounding plain (Postgate 1992, 25).

(p. 107) Throughout the literature of the ancient Near East we encounter the idea that the gods themselves built cities. Indeed, in order to cement the primacy of the city of Babylon in the territorial kingdom of the later second millennium BCE, the Babylon Epic of Creation has the gods themselves build the city as a home for Marduk, their newly crowned king. In particular, the temple was seen as the actual residence for the god, and therefore it imbued the city with a divine presence that was clearly visible. This idea was common to city-state cultures throughout the Near East. Within the literature of the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible stands out in its antipathy toward urban space. Indeed, even the usual admiration for the productive qualities of the farmer was subverted when Cain slew Abel. And yet, this can be viewed as a clear first millennium BCE response to the power of urban-based empires like Assyria and Babylonia. The great temple in the city of Jerusalem was a familiar symbol and an urban institution. The romantic association with pastoralism may be a reflection of a seminomadic past, either real or imagined, but the urban basis for the Israelite community shows an essential continuity with Canaanite ancestors in places like Ugarit, Byblos, and Tyre.

All activities within the city were viewed by its residents as promoting stability and upholding a divine order. The system was supported by a vast number of dependent laborers who performed most of the necessary agricultural work, and who formed the labor gangs that could be called upon for wall building, canal maintenance, and even military activity. The urban elite in these cities can accurately be called the "professional

classes.” Those individuals who were identified in our texts as having a profession make up the group of largely free individuals about whom we are best informed and who enjoyed all of the privileges of belonging to the urban community.

In times of political unrest, the urban centers themselves were remarkably stable. Archaeological surveys show that difficult times might have led to widespread abandonment of outlying sites, but not of the major cities. With a few exceptions (like Eridu at the end of the third millennium BC) the cities were extraordinarily durable over time even when the smaller settlements that surrounded them were not (Postgate 1994, 50). This permanence was not only physical but also ideological. Long after the independent cities of the Near East had been subsumed by larger states, the cities themselves continued to exercise tremendous political power and ideological significance.

Kingship and Other Institutions of Government in the City-State

Outside of its monumental architecture, the most visible symbol of the ancient Near Eastern city-state was its king. The Sumerian legend of Gilgamesh and Akka proclaims, “You watch over Uruk, the handiwork of the gods, the great rampart. (p. 108) You are its king and warrior, an exuberant person, a prince beloved of Anu.” (Translation after the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, www-etcs1.orient.ox.ac.uk.) The king was the divinely chosen leader of the city. His decisions could be discussed but not questioned. As we have seen above, the evolution of this position of authority is unclear because its origins lay in prehistory. The association of the king with divine sanction shows that the origins of state power were associated with the growth of the power of cult centers. The coercive power of the monarch therefore proceeded directly from his association with the gods. The poorly understood sacred marriage ceremonies, in which kings of early Mesopotamia would perform sexual rituals with high priestesses, attest at the very least to this close connection (Bahrani 2002).

This does not, however, mean that we can return with comfort to the outdated notion of the temple city (Falkenstein 1974; Foster 1981; but see also Gelb 1971). While evidence like the Uruk Vase has been interpreted to support the idea of an early priest-leader, this is a speculative assumption in the absence of clearer evidence. The terminology for leadership in Sumerian did undergo some significant changes over the course of the third millennium BCE. The earliest city leaders were identified by the term *en* or lord, a title later reserved for the priesthood. By the middle of the third millennium BCE, the titles *lugal* and *ensi* had appeared as designations for the city rulers. The former term, meaning “great man” in Sumerian, is customarily translated as “king.” The latter term is usually translated as “governor” (and perhaps best understood as “steward”; see Wilcke 2007, 28–30); and this title survived into the era of territorial states as a term for city governors

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

subordinate to royal authority. This “evolution” of titles has also been adduced as evidence for the earlier prominence of the priest-leader.

Moreover, the palace as a physical location for kingship made a relatively late entrance into the archaeological record. The palace as a distinct architectural component of the city first appeared in the Early Dynastic Period, becoming visible to archaeologists around the middle of the third millennium BCE. Palaces were most often located at the edges of urban centers, implying that they developed rather late and were not accounted for in whatever initial urban planning may have taken place. This does not mean that a secular central authority did not exist earlier, but rather that the palaces may have been an expression of conspicuous consumption by the growing royal elite (Van De Mieroop 2002). As far as the historical record is concerned, secular authority always existed in the city-states of the ancient Near East.

The role of the king in the Near Eastern city-states was most often likened in texts to that of the shepherd. The king as shepherd protected his people from the world around them and from each other. This required first and foremost the maintenance of urban necessities, such as city walls and temple platforms, a process that illustrates the direct ways in which the ideology of urban life became central to expressions of royal authority. Only in the city could men realize their potential, and the city itself could only be maintained through the correct actions of the (p. 109) king. It is hardly surprising then that the efforts made by kings to document these activities were so prolific. Indeed, texts honoring building (or rebuilding) activity are the most common royal inscriptions that survive from ancient Mesopotamia. The idea of the king as shepherd of his people went far beyond looking after the physical surroundings of the city and included a direct concern for the welfare of the city-state’s inhabitants. One of the earliest expressions of this comes from the so-called reforms of Uru’inimgina, a ruler of Lagash (ca. 2400 BCE).

He cleared and canceled obligations for those indentured families, citizens of Lagash, living as debtors:

Uru’inimgina solemnly promised Ningirsu that he would never subjugate the orphan and the widow to the powerful.

In the same year, he dug the Tugirsu’ituka canal for Ningirsu...

The canal is pure, its bed is clear—may it (ever) bring flowing water to Nanshe!
(Cooper 1986, 73)

The king exercised power over both the social and the physical environment. He could forgive debts and also bring water to the fields and to the city. Clearly, the king had control over the administration of justice, the economy, and the military. To aid him in his various endeavors, a series of hierarchies developed that provided officials to enforce the will of the crown. This led to the creation of an urban elite dependent on the person of the king for its position. As a result, the king stood at the head of multiple organizations (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 119). In his most prominent role, amply documented in royal

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

inscriptions and literary texts, the king was the state leader. The king was also the head of his own household, which was the chief social, economic, and military presence in the city, and to which many of the officials of the city-state belonged.

We can identify three groups of people in the city-states of the Near East, and each group can be precisely positioned by its relationship to the king's household. Below the king were the officials in charge of the various urban institutions of the state. These were priests, supervisors of granaries, overseers of various agricultural and craft activities, and so on. These officials often directly supervised the work of the dependent laborers who were at the bottom of the system. Between the officials and the dependent laborers was a large group of urban professionals and craftsmen, such as merchants, smiths, heralds, wealthier farmers, and others. Together with the officials, this group comprised the segment of society that we might consider to be analogous to citizens of the city-state. These were the free individuals who were clearly subordinate to royal authority but who were often free to operate beyond its direct control. The large class of semi-free dependent laborers can be distinguished from this group because they were supported to a great extent by the ration system that was at the center of the redistributive economy of these city-states. Of course throughout Near Eastern antiquity there were also chattel slaves in these communities, but both their social and economic impacts were minimal. Moreover, they played no political role.

The city-state was characterized by other institutions of government that were markedly less authoritarian than the crown. Assemblies were a prominent part (p. 110) of daily life in the cities. They are attested to in the textual record in both our literary and administrative corpora. There is no word in Sumerian or Akkadian for "citizen," but there was clearly an understanding of residence in a city and of participation in the community that approximates our notion of citizenship (Van De Mieroop 1997a). This notion was based on participation in urban institutions such as the assemblies. Assemblies were a feature of early literary texts, like the story of Gilgamesh and Akka. In that tale, Gilgamesh was faced with a demand from Akka, the king of Kish, to submit to his authority. Gilgamesh presented this dilemma before two assemblies, that of the elders of the city and that of the city's able-bodied men. The episode parallels a similar event in the Epic of Gilgamesh when the same two bodies were consulted about Gilgamesh and Enkidu's quest to slay Humbaba. In both cases, there was a split decision with the younger body arguing for action, but in neither example was the king bound by the decisions of these deliberative bodies. Assemblies also appeared in mythical texts describing the divine community. Based in large measure on these literary references, Thorkild Jacobsen developed an influential theory of primitive democracy in Mesopotamia (Jacobsen 1943, 1957). He argued that assemblies had earlier held great authority in the Mesopotamian communities, but that the rise of kingship had rendered them impotent by the time of the historical eras.

We know from later administrative and legal texts that assemblies continued to play a role in Mesopotamia throughout antiquity (Van De Mieroop 1997a, 118–141, where he also addresses the difficult question of whether women could sit in these assemblies, for

which there is no conclusive evidence; Fleming 2004; Seri 2005). The assemblies appear to have handled a variety of local issues, including the trying of certain crimes, on behalf of the king. In contrast to Jacobsen's vision of the assemblies as a holdover from an earlier, more consensual form of government, the assemblies, and the rights of urban residents, actually grew over time in the Near East. Marc Van De Mieroop has pointed out an increased influence of the urban populace on political decisions in later eras (Van De Mieroop 1997a). This is contrary to our expectations based on traditional evolutionary models for the understanding of political development in the ancient Near East; but it is a somewhat logical consequence of the growth and later eclipse of the city-states. At a time when royal authority resided in each of the urban centers of the Near East, there was a more limited range of activity and authority for the assemblies. When, in the era of larger polities, the king was a distant figure, he was compelled to rely more directly on these bodies.

Our view of the government of the city-state in the Near East remains focused most squarely on the king and his officials. The king was charged with building and maintaining the city and its surroundings, with protecting the city and its residents, and with the administration of justice. In order to accomplish this, the king stood at the center of a redistributive economy in which his control over the means of production was quite extensive. To oversee this system, the king relied on a large group of officials who owed their positions to the king himself.

(p. 111) The Administration of the Integrated Economy

The development of the city-state depended on the ability of predominantly agrarian communities to generate a surplus, and then on the elite to pioneer ways of appropriating that surplus for communal purposes. How these two things were accomplished determined much of the social organization of the city-state. The basic building-block of these communities was the household. The economic patterns of the Near Eastern city-states were based entirely on the interactions of the great and small households. The resulting social networks were the product of negotiations among these households. Often these negotiations were coercive, but they were also based on the shared ideologies of urban life that became established in Mesopotamia over the fourth and third millennia BCE.

The household (Sumerian *é*) was the essential socioeconomic unit for the whole of early Near Eastern antiquity. The significance of the household can be seen in the identification of temples as the house of the god (*é DN*), and in the identification of the palace as the big house or great house (Sumerian *é-gal*, composed of the term *é* plus *gal* meaning great). The ancient Mesopotamians modeled the divine world on their own communities. We have seen this already in the existence of the divine assemblies, but we can see it just

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

as clearly in the fact that the gods lived in their “houses” and had to be provisioned. Indeed, just as the temples were imagined as households, the entire city was seen as the household of its patron deity. This notion of the household writ large fed directly into both the social and political organization of the city-states. Thus the secular authority of the king was understood to represent his stewardship of the city on behalf of the god.

This emphasis on the household can be seen in the literary traditions across the ancient Near East. In the Ugaritic Ba’lu myth, one of the main preoccupations is the absence of a house for one of the principal gods.

You have good news Ba’lu!
I bring you good news!
They may build you a house like those of your brothers,
A court like those of your kin.
Summon a caravan to your house,
Wares to your palace;
Let the mountains bring you massive amounts of silver,
Let the hills bring you the choicest gold,
Then build a house of silver and gold,
A mansion of purest lapis-lazuli. (Pardee 2003)

An individual’s place in society was based on his association with a particular household. Most significant for individuals was membership in a familial (p. 112) household. And for the heads of those households, this likely meant additional privileges and responsibilities, such as membership in the local assembly. Various officials, especially priests and military officers, belonged to one of the great institutional households, such as temple and palace, and therefore had more than one household affiliation.

In arguing for the development of tremendous central authority in the Mesopotamian cities at least as early as the Late Uruk period, I am not suggesting that the individual households lost or abdicated all of their ability to exercise agency in their socioeconomic relations with the urban community. At the same time, the very fact that the state controlled so much of the resources and social interactions in the city and its surroundings was a hallmark of state formation and of the creation of an elite. The city-states of the Near East were characterized by a tributary economy (Pollock 1999, 79). The extraction of resources from the surrounding land and villages allowed the crown to organize the productive capacity of the city. This led to the appropriation of much of the collective wealth and its redistribution. This did not mean, however, that all households were under the direct authority of the king. Throughout the ancient Near East urban professionals retained a significant amount of economic freedom, along with significant access to the various means of production. Figure 3.1 is a schematic representation of the various economic households and their interactions.

There was obviously more flexibility in the system than is implied here. Some craftsmen, such as potters, could be dependent laborers who worked part-time for institutional households and part-time for their own households. Chattel slaves were a part of many of these households, both the great institutions and the smaller individual households.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Within the larger institutions, especially the temples, there were entire workshops of slaves, producing things like textiles. Moreover, there were circumstances under which the independent and smaller households could acquire access to dependent laborers through their relationships with the institutional households.

Each household, and each segment of the economy, had obligations to fulfill to the city-state's central authority. These obligations took numerous forms. Within the institutional economy most of the produce was reserved for official use and for redistribution. For the noninstitutional household, there were corvée labor responsibilities, as well as payments to be made to the crown in return for access to resources. All of this required the growth of the central administration to monitor economic activity and engage in planning. These officials often turned to other urban professionals to help them carry out their tasks. For example, most taxes were paid in kind. The great institutions then turned to professionals, such as merchants, to exchange bulk goods for other needed commodities or precious metals.

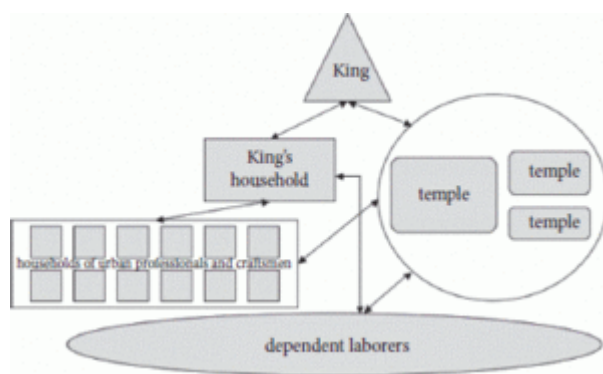


Fig. 3.1 A representation of the city-state economy

The growth of state power was accomplished in cooperation with local groups, such as shepherds and merchants, who often performed specialized functions. Critically, these individuals, often organized in professional groups, retained a great deal of independence from

the crown. Membership in professional organizations was most often hereditary and professional hierarchies were based on criteria, (p. 113) like kinship ties, over which the state had no direct control. Even during those episodes of state growth that accompanied the formation of early territorial states, the royal household depended greatly on the local and regional groups to make its direction of the economy more efficient. We can see this very clearly in the operation of merchants at the end of the third millennium BCE (Garfinkle 2008b). Far from the imposition of a centralized and rational bureaucracy, what actually occurred was a growth in scale of the household of the king and its dependence on traditional means of administration. Therefore, the kings could never exercise the kind of authoritarian economic control of the city-states that is often ascribed to them.

The fundamental feature of the economy of the Mesopotamian city-state was the management of the agrarian economy, and within this sector the most critical factor was the procurement of labor, not land. There were both temporary and permanent solutions to the crises caused by the lack of availability of labor. On a temporary basis, virtually all residents of the city-state were subject to corvée labor. They would be called up, most often at those times of the year when the need for agricultural labor was lowest, to work on civic projects and to serve in the military. More permanently, a substantial percentage

of the population was dependent laborers, bound to an institution that supported them with rations. Among the dependent laborers, many received rations for only part of the year and were otherwise expected to work on subsistence plots or to hire themselves out. Within southern Mesopotamia, particular attention must be paid to agricultural idiosyncrasies: barley fields could not be as productively managed in the noninstitutional sector, hence the prevalence of usufruct; whereas orchard land could be effectively run by noninstitutional households, hence the prominence of records of the alienation of such land (along with records of the sale of urban land for homes).

Alongside the constraints imposed by the local environment, the internal mechanisms of exchange were more of a determining factor in socioeconomic organization than other issues like foreign trade. Hence, the prominence of redistribution to provide for the vast system of dependent labor that characterized early Mesopotamia. This was an economy in which chattel slaves, in large part because (p. 114) of the high cost of their maintenance, were not economically significant. And debt slavery, which was commonplace, was a source of grave concern to the central administration because it affected the availability of dependent laborers.

All of this led in essence to the tripartite social system that was later reflected in the Laws of Hammurabi: free man, commoner, slave (Roth 1997). Politically, as explained above, the royal officials and urban professionals constituted the first category, while the majority of the residents of the city would fall into the second category. The Akkadian word for “commoner” is a participle that translates directly as “someone who bows down before another,” essentially shorthand for dependent laborer.

As the urban population grew, over the course of the fourth and early third millennia BCE, the central administration moved from an emphasis on organizing distribution of rural surplus and of trade goods, and the control of some corvée labor for the maintenance of canals and public buildings, to the management of production as well. This established the patterns for the tributary economy that remained characteristic of city-states throughout their history in the ancient Near East. The evidence also shows this to have been the case well outside of the area in southern Mesopotamia where it first developed. Even coastal centers, like Ugarit, took a similar approach to their agrarian hinterland (Heltzer 2003).

The literate functionaries of these administrative groups were not bureaucrats in the modern sense. This was not a rational bureaucracy but rather a patrimonial administration in which the organizing principles of the large households were extended in scale and authority (Garfinkle 2005, 2008a; Schloen 2001). This model also served to aid in the creation of the larger polities that developed in the ancient Near East. The growth of the territorial state was enabled through institutions, the military foremost among them, which were built on patrimonial models and bound to the households of the ruling families.

Legal and Military Systems in the City-State

As we have seen, the intersections of the institutional and noninstitutional economies, and the interactions among the numerous individual urban households, required the development not only of a concept of justice but also of a legal system to resolve competing claims. Concomitant with this need to protect residents of the city-state from each other was the need to protect these residents against outsiders. Outsiders might be residents of neighboring and competing cities, as we have seen with the Lagash-Umma border conflict of the mid-third millennium BCE, or they might be complete outsiders from the “uncivilized” lands beyond the margins of the city-state system. The city-state needed a military apparatus to support these needs, both defensive and offensive. Significantly, these needs created new elite (p. 115) officeholders whose roles bound them ever more closely to the royal household and who buttressed the growing social power of kingship.

A feature of the ancient Near East, and of Mesopotamia specifically, is that it was relatively open to immigrants throughout its history (Yoffee 1988). This was the result of both geographic and social factors. The openness of the plains of Mesopotamia no doubt led to an emphasis on the massive fortification of the urban centers. It also created the need for a military to man those walls and to defend the gates of the city. The military in the city-states was based on the same principles of corvée labor service that the kings used for their public works projects. There is no evidence for large standing armies in the early city-states of Mesopotamia. We can imagine that within the king’s household, the beginnings of an officer corps emerged to command the occasional levies of residents. Indeed, the military structure presents perhaps the biggest contrast between the organization of the city-states and that of the succeeding territorial kingdoms. The larger kingdoms pioneered the use of standing armies, and the army became a new pathway to elite status within the community. This was already the case in the twenty-fourth century BCE in the first great experiment with larger state formation in the Near East, that of Sargon of Akkad. He famously claimed that “5400 men daily eat in the presence of Sargon, king of the world, to whom the god Enlil gave no rival” (Frayne 1993, 29). This is often interpreted as evidence for a standing army. In the inscriptions of the kings of Akkad we find frequent reference to their battling numerous cities and their armies. The armies of those cities were drawn from levies among the able-bodied men serving their corvée labor obligations and under the direction of members of the king’s household.

Sargon and his successors also claimed to have moored the ships of foreign lands, often from the Persian Gulf and beyond, at their docks. These claims echo those of the Early Dynastic city-state rulers. There was clearly a propaganda value to such claims, especially as they demonstrated that the king maintained access to often precious resources, such as timber, copper, and lapis lazuli. These assertions, however, should be understood as referring to trade rather than conquest.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Nonetheless, warfare for the city-states was economically significant. In their conflicts with neighbors, the city-states were defending the rich agricultural land upon which their prosperity was based. The century and a half of warfare between the cities of Lagash and Umma was the most extreme case. Indeed, part of the grievance of Lagash was based on the fact that Umma was supposed to pay interest to its neighbor for the right to harvest part of the boundary fields. The amounts owed were said to be enormous sums. Even allowing for a certain amount of hyperbole, we can see how the expansion of agricultural territory could be a critical factor in the creation of wealth for the city-state. Moreover, warfare led to the acquisition of booty and the protection of trade routes, both of which were features of state policy throughout the history of the ancient Near East.

The military allowed the kings of the city-states to fulfill their promise to protect the city from outsiders. As we have seen, the king was required to watch over the ramparts of the city and to project the image of powerful warrior. At the (p. 116) same time, these kings made an equal claim to protect the weak within the city. This required the maintenance of an effective justice system and courts of law. A concern for justice is evidenced not only in prominent texts like the reforms of Uru'inimgina, but also in the presence of contracts and records of sale. The administration of justice was a shared responsibility between the king and civic institutions such as assemblies. The king's ability to fulfill this responsibility was one of the primary ways of judging the success of his reign. In his effort to convince the previously independent communities now under his authority of the appropriate nature of his rule, King Hammurabi proclaimed:

At that time, the gods... named me by my name; Hammurabi, the pious prince, who venerates the gods, to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land. (Roth 1997, 76-77)

Collapse: The Growth of the Territorial State and the End of City-States in the Near East?

The growth of the territorial kingdom in Mesopotamia in the latter stages of the third millennium BCE brought about the end of the prominence of the city-state. Given the importance of the different urban centers and the firmly held ideologies of the city-state, it is no surprise that this was a lengthy process. There were several succeeding experiments with territorial states, and it took centuries for the idea to take root. As we have already seen, the Sumerian King List is a testament to the difficult ideological negotiations that took place. The success of the larger territorial states was dependent upon the new rulers' abilities to take proper care of the various urban centers within their states (Roth 1997, 76–81). Critically, the urban centers themselves remained just as prominent a part of both the social and physical landscape. The creation of larger polities was in fact dependent upon the ability of rulers to coerce, and in many cases co-opt, the urban elites of the former city-states. These elites had positioned themselves at the center of the ideological and redistributive networks of the cities, especially as priests, administrators, and military officers.

The era when the city-state was the dominant form of political community in the Near East lasted from the fourth millennium BCE down to the beginning of the second millennium BCE. Even after this long epoch, city-states remained a vital part of the Near East in peripheral and coastal areas in spite of the growth of territorial and imperial states. Indeed, while individual regimes in the Near East were often fragile, and frequently did not outlast a single dynasty, the cities themselves were the most durable expression of civilization. Uruk, the earliest and largest of (p. 117) the Mesopotamian city-states, was still among the largest and most productive urban centers of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid empires 3,000 years after its entrance into the historical record.

References

- Adams, R. McC. 1981. *The heartland of cities: Surveys of ancient settlement and land use on the central floodplain of the Euphrates*. Chicago.
- Adams, R. McC. 2008 "An interdisciplinary overview of a Mesopotamian city and its hinterlands." *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 1.
- Algaze, G. 1993. *The Uruk world system*. Chicago.
- Algaze, G. 2008. *Ancient Mesopotamia at the dawn of civilization: The evolution of an urban landscape*. Chicago.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Bahrani, Z. 2002. "Performativity and the image: Narrative, representation, and the Uruk Vase." In E. Ehrenberg, ed., *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen*, 15-22. Winona Lake, IN.

Cooper, J. 1983. *Reconstructing history from ancient inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma border conflict*. Malibu, CA.

Cooper, J. 1986. *Sumerian and Akkadian royal inscriptions, I: Presargonic inscriptions*. New Haven, CT

Dahl, J. 2007. *The ruling family of Ur III Umma: A prosopographical analysis of an elite family in southern Iraq 4000 years ago*. Leiden.

Ehrenberg, E., ed. 2002. *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen*. Winona Lake, IN.

Falkenstein, A. 1974. *The Sumerian temple city*. Malibu, CA.

Fleming, D. E. 2004. *Democracy's ancient ancestors: Mari and early collective governance*. Cambridge.

Foster, B. 1981. "A new look at the Sumerian temple state." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24: 225-241.

Frayne, D. 1993. *Sargonic and Gutian periods (2334-2112BC)*. Toronto.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2005. "Public versus private in the ancient Near East." In D. C. Snell, ed., *A companion to the ancient Near East*, 384-396. Malden, MA.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2008a. "Was the Ur III state bureaucratic? Patrimonialism and bureaucracy in the Ur III period." In S. J. Garfinkle and J. C. Johnson, eds., *The growth of an early state in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III administration*, 55-62. Madrid.

Garfinkle, S. J. 2008b. "Silver and gold: Merchants and the economy of the Ur III state." In P. Michalowski, ed., *On Ur III times: Studies in honor of Marcel Sigrist*, 63-70. Boston.

Garfinkle, S. J., and J. C. Johnson, eds. 2008. *The growth of an early state in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III administration*. Madrid.

Gelb, I. J. 1971. "On the alleged temple and state economies in ancient Mesopotamia." *Studi in Onore di Edoardo Volterra* 6: 137-154.

George, A. 1999. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. London.

Heltzer, M. 2003. "The Tithe in Ugarit." In W. W. Hallo, ed., *The context of scripture*. Vol. 3: *Archival documents from the biblical world*, 201-202. Leiden.

Jacobsen, T. 1943. "Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2: 159-172. (p. 118)

Jacobsen, T. 1957. "Early political development in Mesopotamia." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 52: 91–140.

Liverani, M. 1997. "Lower Mesopotamian fields: South vs. north." In B. Pongratz-Leisten et al., eds., *Ana šadî Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittellmeerrischen Kulturen: Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*, 219–227. Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Liverani, M. 2006. *Uruk: The first city*. London.

Lomas, K., et al., eds. 2007. *Literacy and the state in the ancient Mediterranean*. London.

Marcus, J., and J. A. Sabloff, eds. 2008. *The ancient city: New perspectives on urbanism in the Old and New World*. Santa Fe, NM.

Michalowski, P. 2008. *On Ur III times: Studies in honor of Marcel Sigrist*. Boston.

Nichols, D. L., and T. H. Charlton, eds. 1997. *The archaeology of city-states: Cross-cultural approaches*. Washington, DC.

Nissen, H. J. 1988. *The early history of the ancient Near East, 9000–2000 b.c.* Chicago.

Nissen, H. J. 2001. "Cultural and political networks in the ancient Near East during the fourth and third millennia B.C." In M. Rothman, ed., *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*. Santa Fe, NM.

Nissen, H. J., P. Damerow, and R. K. Englund. 1993. *Archaic bookkeeping, writing and techniques of economic administration in the ancient Near East*. Chicago.

Pardee, D. 2003. "Ugaritic Myths." In W. W. Hallo, ed., *The context of scripture*. Vol. 1: *Canonical compositions from the biblical world*, 242–283. Leiden.

Pollock, S. 1999. *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Cambridge.

Pollock, S. 2001. "The Uruk period in southern Mesopotamia." In M. Rothman, ed., *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*, 181–231. Santa Fe, NM.

Pongratz-Leisten, B., et al., eds. 1997. *Ana šadî Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittellmeerrischen Kulturen: Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*. Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Postgate, J. N. 1992. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and economy at the dawn of history*. London.

Postgate, J. N. 1994. "How many Sumerians per hectare?—probing the anatomy of an early city." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4: 47–65.

Robson, E. 2007. "Literacy, numeracy and the state in early Mesopotamia." In K. Lomas et al., eds., *Literacy and the state in the ancient Mediterranean*, 29–52. London.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

- Roth, M. 1997. *Law collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. 2nd ed. Atlanta
- Rothman, M., ed. 2001. *Uruk, Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*. Santa Fe, NM.
- Sasson, J., ed. 1995. *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*. New York.
- Schloen, J. D. 2001. *The house of the father as fact and symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East*. Winona Lake, IN.
- Seri, A. 2005. *Local power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*. London.
- Snell, D. C., ed. 2005. *A Companion to the ancient Near East*. Malden, MA.
- Stone, E. C. 1995. "The development of cities." In J. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*, 235–248. New York.
- Stone, E. C. 2005. "Mesopotamian cities and countryside." In D. C. Snell, ed., *A companion to the ancient Near East*, 141–154. Malden, MA.
- Trigger, B. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations*. Cambridge. (p. 119)
- Trigger, B. 2008. "Early cities: Craft workers, kings, and controlling the supernatural." In J. Marcus and J. A. Sabloff, eds., *The ancient city: New perspectives on urbanism in the Old and New World*, 53–66. Santa Fe, NM.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 1997a. *The ancient Mesopotamian city*. Oxford.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 1997b. "Why did they write on clay?" *Klio* 79: 7–18.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 2002. "In Search of prestige: Foreign contacts and the rise of an elite in Early Dynastic Babylonia." In E. Ehrenberg, ed., *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen*, 125–138. Winona Lake, IN.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 2005. *King Hammurabi of Babylon*. Malden, MA.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 2007. *A history of the ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323BC*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA.
- Wilcke, C. 2007. *Early ancient Near Eastern law: A history of its beginnings*. Winona Lake, IN.
- Wilkinson, T. 1994. "The structure and dynamics of dry-farming states in upper Mesopotamia." *Current Anthropology* 35: 483–520.
- Yoffee, N. 1988. "The collapse of ancient Mesopotamian states and civilizations." In N. Yoffee and G. L. Cowgill, eds., *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*, 44–68. Tucson, AZ.

Ancient Near Eastern City-States

Yoffee, N., and G. L. Cowgill, eds. 1988. *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*. Tucson, AZ.

Steven J. Garfinkle

Steven J. Garfinkle is a professor of ancient history at Western Washington University. His current research focuses on the society and economy of early Mesopotamia.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Mesopotamian Empires

Gojko Barjamovic

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0005

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of state formation in ancient Mesopotamia, focusing on the Greater Mesopotamia region. It explains the role of territorially defined urban communities and kinship-based polities or tribes in state formation, and provides examples of large states that arose slowly through a cumulative process of smaller polities coalescing into larger ones. The chapter also considers the dynamic shifts between city-state culture and imperial unification during the proto-historical period, and discusses the periods of political unification and fragmentation in Greater Mesopotamia prior to the Persian conquest.

Keywords: Ancient Mesopotamia, state formation, Greater Mesopotamia, urban communities, kinship-based polities, city-state culture, imperial unification, political unification, political fragmentation

Introduction

Mesopotamia, “the land between the two rivers,” is a geographical and cultural term applied to most of the drainage basin of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and its inhabitants from early historical times onward. The region known as “Greater Mesopotamia” also includes the Zagros foothills, the flanks of southern and eastern Turkey, and a less well-defined region of lowland Iran and Syria south and west of the Euphrates. This area is home to some of the earliest human settlements, and saw the origin of agriculture, domestication, urbanization, state formation, social stratification, political centralization, bureaucracy, writing, and the first empires.

Mesopotamian Empires

Theoretical studies of state dynamics in Mesopotamia have concentrated on pristine or primary state formation (Yoffee 2005), while much less attention has been devoted to the subsequent process of regional integration and imperialism. Early writers focused on conquest, emphasizing the coercive role of the state in general (Olmstead 1918; Wittfogel 1957; Liverani 2005) and religious imperialism in particular (Holloway 2002, 40–64). Later on, structural typologies of social evolution, world-systems theory, and center-periphery took over as dominant explanatory models (Larsen 1979; Postgate 1992; Lamprichs 1995; Parker 2001; Smith 2003). Focus shifted toward imperial ideology and self-representation (Liverani 1973; 1979; Winter 1981; Machinist 1993; Bahrani 2008), and recently the social basis of political and infrastructural power has received particular attention with prominence given to the study of social and political networks (Mann 1986; Barjamovic 2004; Fleming 2004; Adams 2007; von Dassow 2011; Radner 2011).

(p. 121) Particular to the study of Mesopotamian history is the fact that writing was developed for and tied to clay as a medium. Clay survives well in the ground, and the amount of extant textual documentation from ancient Mesopotamia (ca. 3400–100 BCE) makes it one of the most densely documented historical periods prior to early modern times. Also, unlike Greek and Roman manuscripts, which often exist as copies that have been passed down through tradition, virtually all written sources for Mesopotamian history and statecraft survive directly as documentary records from archives that have remained in the ground since their time of use. This has led to a distinct tradition in the discipline of Assyriology, which is characterized by little debate on manuscriptology and transmission along with a strong focus on archival context and bureaucratic practice (Van De Mieroop 1999). The study of Mesopotamia is also characterized by having an open corpus of texts to which one can expect a sizable sample of new sources added from archaeological excavations each year. The result has been a dynamic historiography in which widely accepted interpretive models occasionally get turned upside-down by new finds.

For the first 1,000 years of recorded Mesopotamian history most texts were written in Sumerian, although, from early on, the cuneiform script was also adapted to render other languages such as Elamite, Hurrian, and various east Semitic dialects. During the following two millennia the greater part of the surviving textual record was written in Akkadian, but corpora in several other languages, including Elamite, Hittite, Hurrian, Luwian, Old Persian, Sumerian, Ugaritic, and Urartean, also survive. Clay tablets continued to be produced until the beginning of the first century CE, but a gradual shift toward Aramaic as the main spoken language across the Near East during the first millennium BCE led to changes in script and the choice of written media. Writing went from being syllabic to alphabetic and from being impressed as cuneiform wedges in clay to being written in ink characters on less durable parchment. With the disappearance of the cuneiform script, the amount of written documentation surviving from the region severely diminishes.

Mesopotamian Empires

In spite of the wealth of written sources, their survival in archives, and not by way of textual transmission, produces an uneven narrative of situations and events. Small islands of dense textual documentation survive in an empty sea of time. Data is recovered mostly by chance, and broad historical generalizations can end up being misleading when based exclusively on the serendipity of preservation. On the other hand, the fact that the cuneiform culture covers more than three millennia (Radner and Robson 2011) offers the historian a unique opportunity to trace social dynamics across an exceptionally long diachronic perspective.

A specific and shared cultural sense of a Mesopotamian world existed and was independent of the presence of a unifying state (Yoffee 2005). But certain structures appear to be of such permanence, and processes of such universality, that they may be assigned an explanatory value. Two points are of particular relevance for the present study. One is the primacy and resilience of the city-state as the basic unit of political and social organization; the other is that the formation of empires in Mesopotamia always appears to have taken place as a part of—and has been dependent upon—a dynamic interaction between economic centralization, (p. 122) agricultural expansion, and urban transformation. Even if quantitative social history always suffers the danger of overgeneralization, and if no developments are continuous but always belong in structurally changing contexts, these two points stand out as particularly impervious to change and feed into a dynamic model of state formation in the region.

An Approach to Mesopotamian Imperialism

Complex social processes that archaeologists follow across millennia led from the early villages of the Fertile Crescent to the first great cities in what is today southern Iraq. By the mid-fourth millennium BC urban centers had formed in the region south of modern Baghdad, in the Susa Plain of Iran, and in the Habur region of northern Syria. The social and demographic dynamics that led to this urban transformation are not well understood, but an important outcome was the development of a series of micropolities, each centered on cities of comparable size, economic foundations, and political organization. In spite of linguistic and cultural differences, these new developments followed an interlocking trajectory and led to comparable results.

Such city-states (Hansen 2000, 2002; Yoffee 2005) became the dominant type of political formation from Iran to the Sinai and remained for several millennia the constituent building-blocks of all larger polities that formed in the region. The main urban centers grew progressively larger during the first half of the fourth millennium BCE as the population condensed into a few densely populated points in a dramatic fashion (Adams and Nissen 1972; Pollock 2001). The demographic implosion was particularly strong in southern Iraq, but it also happened across the Near East as cities became nodal points for military protection; for the coordination of agricultural activities; and for the

Mesopotamian Empires

construction of common building projects, such as canals, fortifications, and religious buildings.

In addition to the territorially defined urban communities, kinship-based polities or tribes that lacked a territorial cognate also played a key role in state formation. However, since our documentation derives almost exclusively from urban contexts, the demonstrably complex interplay between the city-states and the tribal communities is often obscure (Fleming 2004; Sallaberger 2007; Michalowski 2011).

Although the early cities outgrew what could feasibly be seen as face-to-face communities, they frequently retained the broad communal institutions of decision making that characterize village organization. Political power was shared between numerous individuals and institutions, and a significant proportion of the population was involved directly in decision making (von Dassow 2011). Technological constraints on recording and exchange of information between numerous actors of comparable social rank may have been the key factor in the formation of the first (p. 123) literate state bureaucracies (Nissen 1986; Cooper 2004; Liverani 2006). The earliest texts record transfers from one official or institution to the next, and may be the product of social heterarchies in which mandate was weak and built on consent (Larsen 1988).

In some periods the city-states and kinship groups or tribes were united into larger regional states or empires, but the exact dynamics behind such processes in Mesopotamia are hard to follow. A number of the larger polities arose through conquest. They were in many cases linked to the actions of a particular individual, who succeeded in establishing a political or dynastic principle of rule. A few such polities proved stable (or at least durable) for centuries; many were ephemeral and disappeared with the death of their founder.

There are few examples of large states arising slowly through a cumulative process of smaller polities coalescing into larger ones (the state of Elam and Anšan ca. 1400–1100 BCE is a possible candidate); the opposite trend of a gradual disintegration of larger states is well known. The center of a larger state would usually be a former city-state that rose to supremacy, but in several cases this dynamic was coupled with an outside element. Mesopotamian empires were often shaped by individuals or groups who were not native to the communities they came to rule over (the Akkadian empire, the state of Hammurabi, the Kassite state, Mitanni). In some cases they arose in secondary response to an outside competitor, created under duress (Urartu), or through a revolt against a former overlord (the Babylonian empire).

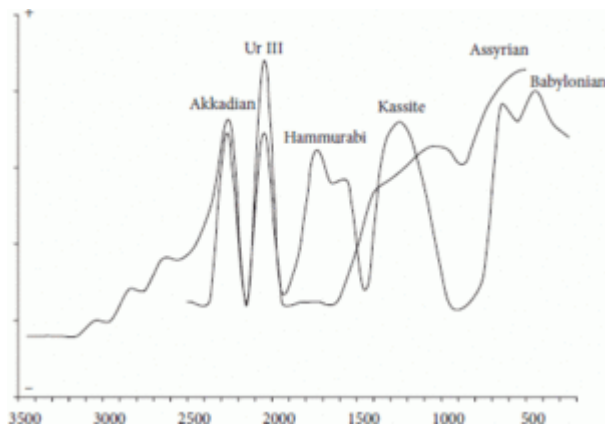


Fig. 4.1 A sketch drawing that shows the oscillation in Mesopotamian history between political fragmentation and imperial centralization from the third to the first millennium BCE

One can present a model of Mesopotamian history in terms of a pendulum swinging between periods of political fragmentation and central rule (see fig. 4.1). At times the region was divided into hundreds of city-states and tribal communities; at other times these were joined in large centralized states.

Although the latter

(p. 124) were often

transient and always based on the self-governed cities and tribal groups, their continued reappearance suggests that they possessed organizational capabilities beyond those of their constituent components. At the same time, it is suggestive of the strength and stability of the micropolities that they would continue to endure and prevail over the political superstructures.

The dynamic shifts between city-state culture and imperial unification may reach back into the proto-historical period, depending upon what interpretation is offered of the Uruk expansion of the late fourth millennium BC (Algaze 1993; Steinkeller 1993; Collins 2000; Liverani 2005). At this time a distinct cultural and administrative form of governance spread from the great cities of southern Mesopotamia as far as the eastern foothills of the central Zagros and southern Turkey. The process behind this expansion is not well understood, but it appears to have involved shared core elements of colonization, organized resource extraction, and the broadcast of a particular culture and a way of life that included shared bureaucratic technologies, belief systems, and iconography (Stein 1999). Similar elements came to characterize later Mesopotamian imperialism.

In addition to the pendulum motion, a few long-term social and economic trends characterize Mesopotamian history. In particular, the south underwent a progressive ruralization between the period of the early city-states and the time of the large territorial empires. Both textual evidence and archaeological surveys show that the percentage of urban population in southern Iraq decreased steadily from about 80 percent during the urban explosion of the mid-third millennium to less than 20 percent during the mid-first millennium BCE (Adams 1981, 138–140; Brinkman 1984). One can also observe an overall shift in the pattern of settlement as the center of population moved progressively from south to north. Finally, there was a dynamic interplay between periods of political centralization and weakness in southern Iraq and western Iran; large regional states or empires rose in Iran during periods of political fragmentation in southern Mesopotamia and vice versa.

Mesopotamian Empires

From the onset of written documentation, periods of political unification and fragmentation in Greater Mesopotamia prior to the Persian conquest can be summed up under the following points. All dates follow the so-called Middle Chronology (cf. Brinkman 1977); most are approximate only:

(1) The age of the city-states circa 2900–2350 BCE in southern Mesopotamia (e.g., Lagaš, Umma, Kiš, Nippur, Ur, Uruk), Syria (e.g., Ebla, Uršu, Mari), and probably also Anatolia, Palestine, and Iran. The cities formed leagues and were organized according to an internal political hierarchy.

(2) The dynasty of Akkade brought southern Mesopotamia and parts of Syria and western Iran under direct provincial rule. Conventionally reckoned as the first example of an imperial state, it lasted for about a century circa 2350–2215 BCE.

(3) Southern Mesopotamia reverts to a system of independent city-states circa 2215–2100 BCE. Elam entered a period of political consolidation and territorial expansion.

(p. 125)

(4) The rise of the Third Dynasty in Ur (also known as Ur III) circa 2100–2000 BCE. Southern Iraq was unified under a centralized bureaucratic imperial core that held hegemony over an extensive periphery of client states and dependencies stretching along the major trade routes toward modern Iran, Syria, and Turkey. After a generation of decline the empire fell to an Elamite invasion that brought about a renewed period of political decentralization.

(5) Greater Mesopotamia and Anatolia was divided into hundreds of polities organized in shifting military and political alliances (ca. 2000–1750 BCE) that vied for land and resources. Political and social networks of territorially defined city-states and tribal confederations based on lines of perceived kinship overlap in a complex manner. At different times the dominant polities were Larsa and Isin (southern Iraq); Ešnuna, Yamhad, Qatna, Mari, Hazor, and Mamma (northern Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and southern Turkey); and Kaneš, Kuššara, Purušhaddum, and Zalpuwa (Anatolia). Toward the end of the period Šamši-Adad unified northern Syria into a loose imperial network, parts of which were subsequently taken over by Zimrilim of Mari.

(6) Elam and Anšan governed by the Šimaški (ca. 2040–1930 BCE) and Sukkalmah dynasties (ca. 1900–1600 BCE), apparently as a confederation or union between several states or territories that led occasional military campaigns into Iraq and Syria and held vested interests as far as the Mediterranean.

(7) Southern Mesopotamia unified under Hammurabi of Babylon (1792–1750 BCE). Political dominance in the north was based on a loose system of dependencies and was ephemeral at best. The crown in Babylon closely regulated economic policies in the conquered south, and subjugated land was often bound directly to the state administration regardless of prior ownership. Local political authority in the south was systematically bypassed while administrators channeled resources directly to the capital. The state survived in diminished form for more than a century (ca. 1750–1595 BCE).

(8) The Mitanni empire covered northern and western Syria and northern Iraq (ca. 1600–1340 BCE) but succumbed to internal strife and the pressure of an expanding Assyrian empire (ca. 1360–609 BCE). Both states were divided into territorial provinces ruled by governors appointed by the ruler. Southern Mesopotamia was controlled by the Kassite dynasty (mid-sixteenth century–1155 BCE) and later by the kings of Isin (1158–1026 BCE). The state of Elam and Anšan went through a period of centralization and consolidation of royal power circa 1500–1100 BC. Anatolia unified under the Hittite empire (ca. 1650–1150 BCE).

(9) There was a period of political fragmentation across the Near East circa 1050–900 BCE and great migrations and shifts in population. The Assyrian state survived in a diminished form, while southern Turkey, Syria, and southern Iraq reverted to a conglomerate of self-governed (p. 126) city-states, small territorial states, and tribal nations that were gradually (re-)included in the Assyrian empire. In the south nominal control was held by the crown in Babylon.

(10) Following the disintegration of the Hittite empire, central and western Turkey became divided into the kingdoms of Phrygia, Lydia, and the principalities and city-states of Tabal (ca. 1100–550 BCE). At its peak in the tenth to eighth centuries BCE, Phrygia formed an empire with a transregional elite culture, a loose provincial system, and a retinue of client states. Later on the Lydian state expanded eastward to become a small and relatively short-lived empire (ca. 660–550 BCE); tradition asserts it established a frontier with the Iranian empire of the Medes (ca. 640–550 BCE) along the Halys River.

(11) The expanding political and military power of the Assyrian empire became increasingly based on territorial provinces, client states, centralized taxation, and a standing army. The expansion culminated in the conquest of Elam and Egypt in the first half of the seventh century BC and the political unification of the Near East.

(12) The empire of Urartu (ca. 830–600 BCE) rose to cover eastern Turkey, Armenia, and western Iran (Zimansky 1985; Salvini 1995). Its administrative system, political structures, and royal ideology were to some extent modeled on Assyria. The king was both the political and religious figurehead of the state. The imperial territory was divided into a loose system of provinces ruled by military governors who often came out of the royal family, client states, and crown land. Ambitious irrigation projects and mass deportations formed the backbone of the state economy. Urartu controlled two important strategic resources of its time: horses and iron. The political fortunes of the state were tied to Assyria; Urartu was in ascendance during periods of Assyrian weakness and in decline during periods of Assyrian strength.

(13) The Neo-Elamite state (ca. 750–550 BCE) developed as a loose confederation under Assyrian military pressure but survived its main antagonist before being engulfed by the emerging Iranian state of the Persians and Medes (Potts 1999; Waters 2000).

(14) The Babylonian empire (626–539 BCE) emerged out of the ruins of Assyria. Political control was centralized and the state administered through an elaborate system of infrastructure and taxation tied to provincial governors and outlying clients. A parallel administrative hierarchy of temple institutions based on transferrable prebends and vast tracts of agricultural land and pastures played a key role in society. Territories stretched across the Near East from Iran to the Sinai before the empire fell the Persian invasion of Cyrus the Great.

The list is of course greatly simplified, and the existence of empires at a given point in history largely depends upon the definition of the term itself. Here the term (p. 127) “empire” is left intentionally vague to denote any type of larger territorial state that held political hegemony over several cities and kinship groups or tribes through military power, formed a supranational elite, and developed a sense of state ideology distinct from that of the individual communities it controlled (cf., e.g., Doyle 1986; Mann 1986; Bang and Bayly 2003; Runciman 2011). Some would reject such broad classifications in favor of a more fine-grained terminology (Nissen 1988, 165–166; Liverani 2005), but no matter what, the list underlines a constant oscillation between political fragmentation and centralization in Mesopotamia (see fig. 4.1).

According to the proposed definition, empires were common throughout the first three millennia of recorded Mesopotamian history but cluster toward the end of the period. Some did not outlive their founder (e.g., the state of Šamši-Adad), while others existed for generations and were decisive for the political tradition in the region (the Akkadian empire, the Assyrian empire). Some were large, loosely based networks of power with little or no ability or desire to penetrate underlying society (the Mitanni empire). Others were small, territorially integrated units that rested on provincial rule and a strong centralizing principle with direct control of workers, infrastructure, and resources (Ur III). In some cases the foundation of society rested upon an explicit expansionist ideology (the Babylonian empire); in other instances the empires were an end result of such expansions coupled with a specific political discourse (Urartu).

Territorial expansion could take place through diplomacy as well as conquest, and some empires were successful in attracting and holding on to clients by structural force alone. Principles of military mobilization would vary from period to period, but certain developmental trends emerge. For those periods where evidence is available, standing military contingents were generally paid by land allotment or usufruct and territorial armies were drafted through systems of *corvée*.

The importance of taxation as a source of state income appears to have increased through time. The early city-states did not support themselves by levying taxes on land or its produce but set aside prebendary lands to generate an economic surplus for the support of its central institutions (Hudson 1998). Imperial taxation strategies would focus on systems of *corvée* that were tied into existing systems of land ownership and as a rule the state did not tax income (Ellis 1976; Stol 1995). Work was not taxed directly either, and

Mesopotamian Empires

levies were collected primarily as tribute on a provincial basis through local officials. Evidence for the taxation of trade is fickle, but appears to have existed in all periods (cf., e.g., Larsen 1967, 141ff; Joannès 2004, 38–39).

The empires would strive to restructure bureaucratic procedures and control systems of production in order to promote certain industries for the benefit of their own consumption and foreign export. The Mesopotamian alluvium is ideally suited for supporting a large population through irrigation-based agriculture and animal husbandry, and during periods of political stability and favorable climate, the soil was capable of producing one of the largest crops known in premodern times. But the fertile river valleys lack a number of key strategic resources, including stone, quality timber, and metal. A series of interlocking circuits of exchange (p. 128) connected the populous cities of Mesopotamia to areas where such resources could be found, such as tin in Iran and Turan, copper in Oman and on Cyprus, gemstones in Afghanistan, spices in east Asia, gold in Egypt, and aromatics in South Arabia (Leemans 1960; Gledhill and Larsen 1982; Warburton 2003; Liverani 2006). As a rule, silver functioned as the international currency of exchange. High-quality textiles constituted the chief Mesopotamian export commodity; in addition, the area presumably always made substantial revenue from its control over the major overland trade routes that connected Asia to Europe.

Hazards of preservation mean that our only well-documented case of an international system of exchange dates to a period of political decentralization in Mesopotamia. Still, it is reasonable to assume that it is representative of the basic or default structure of commercial systems that the empires had to build on. This is the Old Assyrian commercial network of the early second millennium BCE, which belongs to a time when Assur was a modestly sized city-state located on the periphery of the great Babylonian zone of production and consumption (Larsen 1976; Veenhof and Eidem 2008). The network was based on mercantilist principles of geographical monopoly and political protectionism guaranteed by treaty; the Assyrian merchants could do business in Anatolia, but other geographical areas in Syria and the Levant were off limits and presumably belonged to competing networks.

A similar situation is known from the first millennium BCE, where the Phoenician and the Greek coastal city-states effectively divided the Mediterranean between them. The Phoenician states were alternately under Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian imperial control, but the indirect way in which all three empires chose to incorporate them suggests that in spite of their importance as a source of income and strategic resources the trading communities were left politically intact because this allowed them to perform the functions required by the empire more efficiently (Frankenstein 1979; Radner 2004). The income generated by trade was subject to state taxation in various ways. Evidence for a direct tax on trade is attested, for example, in the Old Assyrian Period (Larsen 1967). The state could also exact rights of preemption on select cargo at favorable prices, demand of private merchants that they carry out trade on behalf of state institutions, and impose customs or tolls on imported goods.

Mesopotamian Empires

The phenomenon of keeping the trading communities under indirect control is by no means unique, but relates to issues of outsourcing economic risk, and the fact that private initiative may have been better suited to manage transnational commercial enterprises. Social issues were probably at stake as well, as suggested by the frequent physical separation of the state administration and trading communities. This gave rise to trading quarters (*kārum*) that were often removed from the rest of the city and could have local institutions and even their own legislation. Examples of dual cities (Gilb 2005, 185–186), such as medieval Cairo and Fustat, Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco, or Westminster and the City, may also be in evidence in ancient Mesopotamia, such as at Kaneš and Ur (Gledhill and Larsen 1982). The first member of each pair served as the theater of local political power and was (p. 129) settled by individuals whose wealth was typically tied to ownership of land and its associated social status. The latter were separate communities dedicated mainly to trade and populated by those whose wealth was tied to the fickle and socially volatile proceeds generated by commerce. Market trade is often only visible on the periphery of our sources and bespeaks a public attitude toward the potentially inauspicious effects of trade on established patterns of social mobility and political influence among those who produced most of the written record.

Direct imperial economic strategies would generally be associated with production, and include the founding of settlements dedicated to a particular purpose (cattle stations, military establishments, logging communities, ports of trade), establishing a communication infrastructure (roads, postal systems), and promoting agricultural specialization (viticulture, olive growing, date cultivation, etc.) through a control of labor forces. The distortion of our source material often makes it impossible to determine what level of private entrepreneurship existed at any given point in complement to the state-controlled economy, although there seems to be a developmental trend toward increased privatization (Postgate 2001). The particular bias of the surviving sources has led to the development of a series of heuristic explanatory labels, such as “the temple-state,” “hydraulic civilizations,” “administered trade,” and “palace economy,” which have all been dominant explanatory concepts within the discipline of ancient history at one point or another. They all reflect the surviving sources to some extent, but probably not reality.

Early Empires

Sargon of Akkade founded the first imperial state in Mesopotamia circa 2350 BCE. It lasted for more than a century and became a prototype of statecraft and political leadership; later tradition turned Sargon himself into the embodiment of aristocratic rule (Cooper 1993; Liverani 1993; Van De Mieroop 1999; J. Westenholz 2010). The Akkadian empire united the urban centers of southern Mesopotamia and brought large territories in Syria and Iran under centralized leadership (see map. 4.1). Attempts at extending royal preeminence over the predominantly Sumerian cities of south Mesopotamia are known

Mesopotamian Empires

from the preceding two centuries, but political unification was never realized from within the region itself (Sallaberger and Westenholz 1999).

Sargon came from the Semitic-speaking population settled on the northern periphery of the great Sumerian cities, where traditions of centralized government and systems of land tenure may already have existed (Steinkeller 1993). Mesopotamian history contains many such examples of northern groups expanding into the populous but politically fragmented south. Without subscribing to geographical determinism, the environmental cohesiveness of the northwestern steppe, and the relative ease of communication across it, may have favored the (p. 130) formation of looser polities based on perceptions of kinship or a dynastic principle as opposed to a formal civic identity (Foster and Foster 2009).

Military power in particular seems to have had a base in personal relations, and what were undoubtedly complex social and personal relations that are no longer recoverable led to the creation of an armed retinue of herdsman, who were directly bound to the king. Both contemporary documents and later legends refer to the “heroes” of Sargon, who ate at the king’s table every day (Alster and Oshima 2007).

In other respects the early Akkadian empire may be described as an exploded city-state, whose economic basis and ideological superstructure were founded on time-tested urban traditions. Resource and wealth extraction was based on centralized redistribution and production and a control of agricultural land, trade routes, and labor resources (Foster 1993a). The empire was a territorial addition to the city of Akkade, created through military conquest by a standing army in a self-reinforcing process of expansion and militarization.

The new combination of political traditions, which led to the formation of a private royal army within the framework of a civic political system, may in itself have been an engine for territorial expansion. Annual campaigns and the construction of military strongholds guaranteed initial political control and fueled the process, while a division of the conquered territories into provinces ensured permanent imperial presence.

Sargon initially claims to have installed citizens of Akkade as the rulers of newly conquered cities in the Sumerian south, once again emphasizing the importance of personal relations within the political system. But this approach must have failed, since his successors instated a system of local rule based on the existing political power structure of the city-states. Traditional civic institutions and local elites were left with an extensive measure of self-government in exchange for the payment of imperial grain-taxes and the provision of workers for state-administered building projects.

Instead, large workforces were recruited to extend the irrigational system in southern Mesopotamia, allowing substantial new territories to be brought under the plow. This allowed the foundation of new urban settlements in the space between the territories of the traditional city-states. Imperial administrators were appointed to oversee these new

Mesopotamian Empires

agricultural centers, whose surplus production was reserved primarily for the imperial capital and the army.

Land also came under imperial control as a result of confiscations made from rebellious cities (Foster 2011) or through state expropriation (Postgate 1995). A gradual transfer of temple estates to the crown is in evidence during the last two generations of the empire (Steinkeller 1999), although it is unclear under what level of duress this process took place. The managers of the imperial estates became the heads of patrimonial households that would cut across traditional city-state boundaries and diminish the importance of existing power structures of the city lords and popular assemblies.

Outside the region dominated by the Sumerian city-states military governors were appointed to rule the conquered territories, apparently as tax-farming (p. 131) enterprises. Military officers loyal to the crown were awarded land in the conquered provinces. Trading colonies were founded, such as at Susa in Iran and on the Upper Habur in Syria, presumably to tap into and reinforce existing systems of exchange and gain access to strategic resources (A. Westenholz 1984; Foster 1993b).

The royal court formed the center of the state and members of the king's family held high positions in the political or religious hierarchy. It seems that it was customary for each ruler to tour the empire upon accession to the throne, and the royal verdicts pronounced at such occasions underline the developing notion of the monarch as the ultimate source of justice in society. In the capital city and the main urban centers of the south the popular assembly continued to play an important role, and it seems that a main reason for the relative stability of the Akkadian dynasty was its ability to carve out a power base separate from the orbit of the traditional civic institutions.

Wealth of the new state flowed into the capital, where even ships from distant Indus brought exotic goods to the emerging royal elite. Kings were entertained in an extravagant style formerly reserved for the gods, and the degree of oppression exerted by the imperial system is implied by the fact that great revolts broke out among the city-states at the accession of Sargon's son Rimush and also during the reigns of his grandson Naram-Sin and his great-grandson Sharkalisharri.

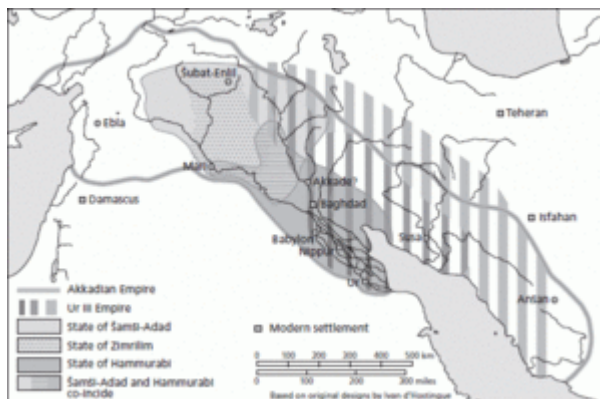
The Akkadians pioneered ways of manifesting kingship through the use of artistic symbolism, titulary, and a royal historiography (Winter 1996), but the imperial elite continued to inspire opposition among the ancient cities. It had upset the traditional balance of local political leadership and the conventional patterns of land use. Soon after it collapsed, it reverted into a system of independent city-states. A poet rejoiced in the fall of Akkade, emphasizing the decadence that had led to its demise (Foster and Foster 2009, 60):

May that city die of hunger,
May its citizens, who dined on the finest foods, lie down in the grass,
May the man, who rose from a meal of first fruits,

Mesopotamian Empires

eat the binding from his roof.

A century after the fall of Akkade, the Ur III empire (ca. 2100–2000 BCE), with its royal capital located at Ur, once more brought the independent Mesopotamian city-states under centralized rule (see map 4.1). The densely settled core region in the south was organized into two dozen provinces that were required to contribute to a collective state fund. Local authority within this zone was maintained through governors appointed from the traditional ruling families of the city-states (Dahl 2007). In counterbalance to local tendencies the empire appointed military commanders to each city (Steinkeller 1987); this system was based on “new men” appointed by the crown, and provided a venue of social mobility for loyal imperial servants.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 4.1 Empires of Western Asia, circa 2350–1700 BCE

The sphere of the governors was essentially that of the city-state and its old temple institutions, retailored to fit the centralized framework of the empire. (p. 132) The domain of the military commanders was built on state dependents living on crown land. In parallel to the Akkadian empire, new administrative foundations

were established in the urban countryside beyond the traditional authority of the city-states to function as hubs for the production and redistribution of state resources.

Surrounding the core provinces there was a zone of autonomous districts governed by military officials appointed by the central power and subject to taxation (Steinkeller 1981; 1987; Sallaberger 2007). Further out was a ring of allies and client states, often with direct ties to the royal family in Ur through dynastic intermarriage (Michalowski 2011, 122–169). The importance of this zone was primarily to secure the imperial frontier and keep open the trade routes leading to and from the center.

In the core provinces, state control of production and labor was based on the development of new administrative procedures, in which work itself came to be treated as an abstract transferable commodity that could be accumulated or dissipated. Labor was measured in man-days and tied to a set of fixed equivalences with grain and silver that allowed careful state monitoring through an intricate system of centralized bookkeeping (Englund 1990; 1991; Dahl 2010). The imperial bureaucracy produced a written record, of which the surviving part by far exceeds any other administrative corpus from the ancient world; some 95,000 individual texts and fragments are currently known from the provincial chancelleries, and it is not uncommon that individuals can be followed through the state records over several years. At the same time, due to its very nature, this

Mesopotamian Empires

extensive paper trail gives a one-sided image that reflects only part of reality. Entire sectors in the state (p. 133) economy are demonstrably absent in the extant records (Van De Mieroop 1999; Steinkeller 2004).

The agricultural landscape of the core provinces was organized through a system of state *corvée*, in which the imperial subjects were obliged to provide a set annual service to the institution that employed them in return for state allotments (Studevent-Hickman 2006; Steinkeller forthcoming). Recent evidence from a rural estate near the ancient town of Garšana has provided some insight into local agricultural administration (Owen and Mayr 2007). The estate was owned by an army general and his wife (herself a royal princess) and housed various industries, including a brewery, a textile workshop, a flourmill, a leather workshop, fields, canals, and orchards. The estate seems to have been located within the territory of the Umma province, but it formed an independent household that was run as a semiprivate enterprise. The surplus production of the estate was sold in nearby cities in a system reminiscent of the later Roman *latifundia*.

It remains to be seen whether this arrangement is representative of the way in which the agricultural hinterland of the Ur III state (and the Akkadian empire for that matter) was organized. Its existence underlines the proposal that the success of the early Mesopotamian empires rested upon their ability to mollify the social and religious elite of the city-states on the one hand, and exploit an exceptional access to labor through mandatory public service on the other, so as to open up new farmland and generate a surplus production that was not tied to the traditional urban centers. One can argue that this remained an underlying feature of Mesopotamian imperialism in the centuries to come.

Networks, Tribes, and Regional States

Following the collapse of the Ur III state, Mesopotamia reverted to a political landscape of city-states and tribal groups tied into networks of changing political alliances that could intermittently attain a character of loose imperial states. In some respects they transcend established categories of statehood and empire, which are marred by ideas of unity, territorial coherency, and primacy that are prone to obscure the dynamics of historical development and setting (Smith 2003, 78ff.).

A case in point is the state of Zimrilim in eastern Syria, which represents a typical but exceptionally well-documented example of such a network (Fleming 2004). Other examples are the states created by Šamši-Adad (1808–1776 BCE) and Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE), which are often categorized as empires in the scholarly literature (see map. 4.1). All three held political hegemony over several cities and kinship groups or tribes, built their power on military organization and elite creation, and developed a sense of ideology that was distinct from that of the individual communities they controlled. But they were also political entities in which monarchic rule was weak and intersected with

Mesopotamian Empires

group-oriented forms of (p. 134) governance to form a social structure based on authority that would transcend territorial demarcations (Mann 1984, 188–189). One can argue that they represent a hybrid model of organization, which connects the epoch characterized by micro-states and loose hegemonic empires in the third millennium BC to an era of organizationally integrated empires that followed from the second half of the second millennium BCE.

Zimrilim was city lord in Mari and thus formed part of an ancient city-state tradition that tied his legitimacy to the dynamics of the palace, the temple, and the town elders. But Zimrilim was also ruler of the Kingdom of the Banks of the Euphrates, which held a considerable territory and included several urban centers. This territory was divided into districts under the charge of provincial governors, each with a local seat of administration. Residents were subject to state taxation and military service. On top of the provincial system Zimrilim was considered a major king in the region and had several client rulers whose aid could be called upon for certain purposes. Finally Zimrilim was the head of an extensive Amorite tribe consisting of two notional moieties known as the Yaminites (those of the right) and the Simalites (those of the left).

This large group considered itself part of one social fabric, divided, not by mode of life or place of dwelling, but according to traditions; the two moieties had distinct social and political identities and modes of organization (Fleming 2004). The Yaminites functioned as a confederation of a handful of tribes ruled by individual kings, and their people were found throughout Mesopotamia. The Simalites were divided into a large number of tribes or clans, but there is no evidence that these divisions had any active political function. Both Yaminites and Simalites incorporated mixed sedentary and mobile populations and would rely on herding as well as agriculture for sustenance. Zimrilim himself was a game-changer—a king of the Simalites who had subjugated the Yaminites by force early in his reign.

The Simalites were concentrated in the provincial territories north of Mari; the mobile groups among them would be classified as “tent-dwellers” and placed in a separate administrative hierarchy that stood outside the provincial system. Individuals in such groups were affiliated with a tribal leader instead of a particular town and district. The tribal leaders would themselves recognize the authority of a pair of “chiefs of pasture,” who reported directly to Zimrilim and his cabinet. In spite of being the acknowledged king of the Simalites, Zimrilim always needed to negotiate with his own tent-dwelling population at tribal conferences in order to win their support, such as for military endeavors.

In essence, Zimrilim ruled a network of polities through several strings of largely independent leadership. Certain institutions in Mari continued to function as in a traditional Mesopotamian city-state, but the town had also become the administrative center of a network of provincial territories and client communities. Finally, it was the seat of the head of the Simalites and the Simalite-Yaminite confederacy. The state included settled communities of farmers, craftsmen, and traders, as well as large groups

Mesopotamian Empires

of mobile herders who recognized Zimrilim's political authority also when they were grazing their animals hundreds of miles (p. 135) beyond the state frontier. It contained individuals who would have defined themselves predominantly on the basis of a territorial and political belonging to a city, as well as individuals who identified themselves primarily on the basis of kinship.

Structures similar to those found in the kingdom of Zimrilim characterized the states governed by Šamši-Adad in northern Mesopotamia and Hammurabi of Babylon in the south, although the concentration of traditional urban centers led to a higher degree of provincialization and local power in the latter. Political and social power could be separate and sometimes indistinguishable in physical and communal space, and a complex interaction between traditional civic and tribal identities characterizes all three states. Yet, only the more urban-based kingdom of Hammurabi would ultimately prevail and outlive its founder.

The king of Babylon was successful in unifying southern Mesopotamia and creating a regional state based on territorial provinces that prevailed for almost two centuries. The centralized state administration based on *corvée*, private entrepreneurs, temple institutions, and crown lands had components reminiscent of the Ur III system as well as elements indicative of things to come. The state collapsed under a Hittite raid in 1595 BCE and a new dynasty of rulers belonging to an ethnic group known as the Kassites rose to the throne in Babylon.

The Kassite kings restructured south Mesopotamia into a strongly integrated regional state and developed a broader sense of Babylonian distinctiveness that would gradually replace earlier kinship divisions and downplay the identity connected to the old urban centers and temple institutions. The state was organized into a small number of territorial provinces, and political power centered on a few influential individuals with extensive workforces of slaves and conscripted laborers at their command (Tenney 2011). The region underwent a progressive ruralization during the second half of the second millennium BCE (Foster 1987), and the number of large urban centers in Mesopotamia diminished compared to earlier times. Instead, the period saw a rise of family groups or houses headed by a "lord of the mansion." These were large agrarian households located in the countryside that could include numerous people and considerable land. With time they appear to have grown increasingly dependent upon forced labor (Brinkman 1980). The most important cities were Babylon, Nippur, and the newly founded royal seat at Dur-Kurigalzu. Nippur was regarded as a favored provincial capital and its governor held a position similar to a viceroy with an extensive mandate in terms of economic and even foreign policy.

The Kassite dynasty proved stable and long-lived. At least thirty-six kings are known to have held the throne over almost four centuries down to 1155 BCE. Under their rule Babylon emerged as one of the major powers in the Near East, on equal terms with Egypt, Mittani, and Hatti (see map. 4.2). The state came to play a dynamic role in the

Mesopotamian Empires

Late Bronze Age commercial networks that connected the Mediterranean region to Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 4.2 Empires of the Near East, circa 1500-1100 BCE

It has recently come to light that the early Kassite kings extended their control south to include the important trading emporium of Bahrain under their control

(p. 136) (Potts 2006).

Presumably this reflects the commercial goals of the state and not the ambition to carve a far-flung territorial empire. In

fact, the extent to which the core provinces were integrated and the cities of Babylonia joined in a regional state appears to be a distinguishing feature of Kassite rule and a key to its success. Political and social developments under the Kassite dynasty suggest a move toward a more compact form of state, in which territorial size was diminished, but the level of state control over the inhabitants of that territory was increased compared to the preceding centuries.

In the east, Elamite rulers, who used the title “king of Susa and Anšan” to reflect the unification of the Iranian highlands and lowlands, created a multicentered imperial state on par with the other major powers of the period (Potts 1999). During the heyday of the Kassite state circa 1400–1200 BCE the royal houses of Babylon and Elam maintained close relations through diplomacy and intermarriage. The twelfth century BCE saw a disruption in cordiality, which culminated in the kings of Elam overthrowing the Kassite dynasty, looting large parts of Babylonia, and removing the all-important cult statue of the national god Marduk to Iran. The period is characterized by a gradual centralization of royal power and a departure from the traditional Iranian political system of divided authority within a regionally based federation of local dynasties. The state actively pursued an “Elamization” of the ethnically and linguistically diverse population of Susiana, and supported a proliferation of the highland religious cults to imply a cultural and political subjugation of Susiana by the old Elamite confederation (Vallat 1998).

(p. 137) The kings of Elam founded new royal capitals (Kabnak and Dur-Untaş) away from the traditional centers of civic power and landed aristocracy. Their feat appears to be characteristic of the period, and contemporary (fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE) examples found elsewhere in the region are Dur-Kurigalzu in Babylonia, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta in Assyria, Tarhuntašša in Hatti, and Akhetaten in Egypt. Presumably the trend is indicative of a general shift in the perception of monarchic rule throughout the Ancient Near East, which led to the physical removal of the ruling court from those ruled.

Mesopotamian Empires

North of the Kassite state, the empire of Mitanni succeeded in uniting the predominantly Hurrian-speaking region of Syria and took control of a territory that stretched from the Mediterranean to the western flanks of the Zagros (Wilhelm 1989; Zaccagnini 1999; Freu 2003; von Dassow 2010). It bound formerly independent polities into a loose federation by means of military force and shifting diplomatic alliances. Provincial rule was left to client kings, who in many cases came from the former ruling families and continued to function on their own terms as long as they recognized Mitanni supremacy. Evidence is scarce, but it seems that a clan of landed gentry controlled substantial properties across the empire in a manorial system that may have had its origin in the gradual collapse of the city-state system into territorial states such as Qatna and Yamhad in northern Syria in the eighteenth to seventeenth centuries BCE. The manorial houses arose at the expense of a class of free peasants, who had formerly owned the land and been subject to corvée duties. This system centralized production of agricultural products and textiles, among other things, and as in contemporary Babylonia, it grew increasingly dependent upon servile labor.

The Assyrian Empire

Mesopotamian Empires

The city-state of Assur became part of the Mitanni empire in the fifteenth century BCE as a client kingdom, but was allowed to retain its own dynastic line and continued to function on the basis of local traditions. By this time, Assur already had an ancient history as an oligarchic city-state of moderate size, located on a traditional crossing of the Tigris River in northern Iraq (Larsen 1976). Its strategic position and proactive trading policy had secured it a status as a commercial hub and a wealth that presumably formed the foundations for the later empire.

When Mitanni became caught up in a war of succession circa 1360 BCE Assur reclaimed its independence and began a process of rapid territorial expansion. The resulting state can be said to represent a culmination of the imperial drives in Mesopotamia, the biggest swing of the pendulum, so to speak. It existed for over three-quarters of a millennium and was able to act on a wider scale than any empire before it. It became a prototype for transnational imperialism, royal ideology, and court culture, and it established a model of imperialism that came to reach beyond its own history and the geographical area in which it had evolved. (p. 138) Through alternating periods of expansion and contraction, it managed to extend its hegemony to the edge of the known world and for the first time bring the Near East under one rule. It can be used to address questions of territoriality and political authority and to show how statehood changed through time, adapting to past experience and existing challenges.

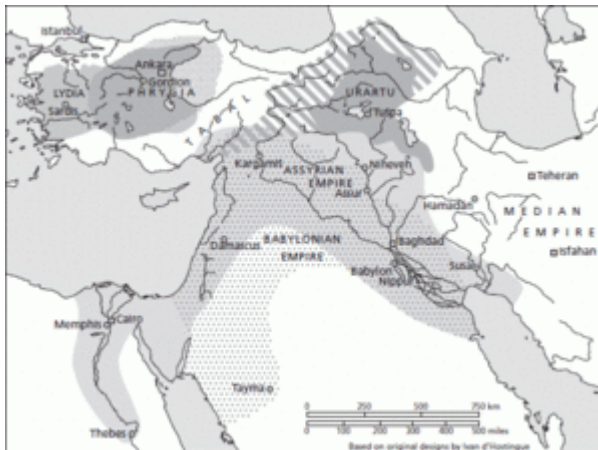
During the early phase circa 1360–1100 BCE commonly known as the Middle Assyrian Period, the state rose to power as an empire with provinces extending across northern Iraq and Syria (Liverani 1984; Postgate 1992). The era is characterized by a transition from city-state to territorial empire and a redefinition of Assyrian royal power (see map. 4.2). The late or Neo-Assyrian imperial phase circa 883–609 BCE refers to an era of rapid expansion, which culminated in the formation of a universal empire that unified the Near East politically from Egypt to Iran (see map. 4.3). Internal restructuring transformed Assyria from a loose network of isolated administrative focal points toward a state of territorial integration (Garelli and Lemaire 1997; Radner 2004). In between were years of weakness and partial collapse, but dates are conventional and mainly refer to deteriorating conditions of elite political structures and the complex urban economy. A distinctive state and identity existed throughout the fifteen centuries of recorded Assyrian history (ca. 2100–600 BCE), and the chronological partition conceals what the Assyrians themselves perceived as a historical continuum. At least since 1350 BCE Assyria was an empire ruled by a single dynasty that held the city of Assur as its religious and ideological center.

The city of Assur became the royal capital of a territorial empire known as the “Land of Assur” centered on a region around the city itself and the ancient urban centers of Nineveh and Arbela further north. From the beginning, conquests were divided into imperial provinces headed by governors, and early on the western territories held a special status under the administration of an imperial viceroy (Jakob 2003; Tenu 2009).

Mesopotamian Empires

A dark blend of religious and militaristic ideology placed the king in the center of the universe and presented Assyria as a land enclosed by a ring of evil. Social justice became a royal domain, and it was the sovereign's prime duty to subjugate internal malevolence and eliminate outside threats to civilization (Foster 1993c, 231):

The lands of one accord have surrounded your city
Assur with a noose of evil,
all of them have come to hate the shepherd,
whom you named....



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 4.3 Empires of the Near East, circa 900–550 BCE

A number of the characteristic elements of Assyrian imperialism were instituted already during the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BCE, including the systematic deportation of populations to concentrate labor resources and weaken local identity. Other general elements include the creation of a provincial infrastructure, based on military fortresses and

administrative centers, and the creation of a standing army that could operate in addition to larger hosts levied through drafts (Jakob 2003, 195ff.; Postgate 2007; 2008). (p. 139)

The Assyrian fusion of royal and priestly power was different from the southern Babylonian tradition, where royal power had become gradually separated from the religious institutions during the second millennium BCE. The new imperial system of governance took form on the basis of the oligarchic assembly of the former city-state of Assur, and by the fourteenth century BCE Assyria had turned into a centralized dominion with an expansionist agenda headed by the king and a landed aristocracy.

Executive power moved away from the civic institutions, and the first few generations after the independence from Mitanni mark a period of transition in which the formerly dominant groups were absorbed or rejected by the emerging elite. There is no single point in time when this happened, no Rubicon and no Caesar who usurped public power. In that sense, the history of Assyria is not only the history of the growth of an empire but also the history of the growth of an imperial idea (Beaulieu 2005, 49).

Particular to the early empire was a tendency to demolish local political and bureaucratic institutions in the newly conquered areas and insert a local ruling class of ethnic Assyrians. With the growth of the universal empire in the ninth century BCE onward this practice was abandoned, and the Assyrian imperial elite became inclusive, multicultural,

Mesopotamian Empires

and multiethnic. Assyrianized nobility from subordinate states could work their way into the imperial elite by openly emphasizing their commitment to the king (Parpola 2004; 2007). This process was tied to a gradual transfer of power from a hereditary landed aristocracy to a nobility whose (p. 140) position was personal, based on royal appointment, and dependent upon personal loyalty (Garelli and Lemaire 1997, 126ff.; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999).

During the late empire period they formed a group of men known collectively as “the magnates”; many were eunuchs recruited directly from the imperial bureaucracy who had direct access to the king and would act as royal counselors (Radner 2011). They occupied the most prominent positions in the imperial administration, including posts as provincial governors, senior military leaders, and court officials.

A period of general instability struck the Near East in the twelfth century BCE causing states to collapse and populations to move. Assyria barely survived this trial and the empire lost control of most of its western possessions. Hostilities diminished in the late eleventh century as territories formerly under imperial Hittite, Assyrian, Kassite, or Egyptian control coalesced into a system of city-states, tribal holdings, and small territorial states throughout Babylonia, Syria, the Levant, and southern Turkey (Larsen 2000; Thuesen 2000). From the early ninth century BCE the process of Assyrian conquest regained speed, initially as a restoration of lost provinces and later as a regular territorial expansion.

After an early phase of successes under Assurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and his son Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE) followed a period of weakness in royal authority and increasing decentralization. Provincial governors gained an extensive measure of sovereignty and de facto turned their territories into client states. Concurrently, the Urartean empire expanded in the direction of Assyria and threatened its interests in the Anatolian and Iranian Highlands. The fact that the imperial provincial administration maintained territorial status quo during this period of royal weakness, but did not embark upon further expansion, suggests that a strong centralized power was fundamental for Assyrian imperial growth and was tied to central authority and its ability to coordinate resources.

As political power became concentrated within a narrow circle of people, it could in principle be shared between them; but as the empire grew, and the estates of the provincial governors became increasingly separated from the capital, authority shifted to the periphery and began threatening state integrity. This development was effectively curtailed by the absolutist reforms of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BCE), who reorganized the provincial system to reduce the power of the magnates, restructured the imperial army and its supportive infrastructure, and revived an aggressive and expansive Assyrian foreign policy against Urartu, Phrygia, and Babylonia. By the end of his reign, Assyria had severely restrained the power of Urartu in the west, secured authority in large parts of Syria, and gained control over most of the city-states and tribal nations of Babylonia.

Mesopotamian Empires

The following four reigns of Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal mark the apex of Assyrian power and the closing golden age of the empire. Wars and civil uprisings continued on the margins of the state, which grew steadily as Assyria eliminated its enemies through conquest and diplomacy. In the core regions peace was lasting and some provinces saw economic prosperity with little or no conflict for two centuries. By the time of Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE) a civil (p. 141) war broke out between the king and his brother, who held the crown of Babylon and had allied himself with Elam. The conflict lasted five years, draining Assyrian resources and permanently alienating several of the Babylonian communities. A retaliatory attack on Elam effectively laid waste Assyria's eastern neighbor but opened up its flank to the emerging state in Iran. After the death of Assurbanipal the empire descended into internal and external strife, and between 614 and 609 BCE it succumbed to a military alliance of Babylonians and Medes

Economy, Structure, and Policy

The Assyrian heartland was formed by a rich agricultural zone that was less dependent upon artificial irrigation than the cities of the south. A number of large settlements lay along the Zagros foothills, the rivers descending from the mountains, and the Tigris River. In addition to staple crops, the area supported vineyards, orchards, and open grasslands suited for animal husbandry. Stretching west was the open steppe settled by smaller towns and groups of nomadic herdsman. In imperial times the agricultural surplus from these areas went into the maintenance of the royal and provincial capitals.

To begin with, the expansion of the empire stimulated the economy by bringing new wealth and manpower under control by the state; but the stimulus could only gain permanent effects through a continuous readjustment of local economic structures. The methods applied were in essence the time-tested approaches of Mesopotamian imperialism, such as the reorganization of the agricultural sector and the use of organized labor to open up new lands, but Assyria undertook such endeavors on an entirely different scale. The concentration of wealth in the capital cities gave strength and authority to the crown, and was the necessary adjunct to a political system that was turning increasingly absolutistic. Conversely, it also meant that Assyria grew vulnerable to disruptions of supplies from its outlying regions, increased devaluation due to a constant influx of precious metal, and the increase of residents who were not directly engaged in food production (Bedford 2007). To counter such tendencies, suitable ecological zones and areas of resource extraction were singled out to accommodate production on an industrial scale. In some areas the empire promoted cultural hybridization and economic specialization as two approaches to the same end (Lamprichs 1995; Gitin 1997). The local physical infrastructure was enhanced and provincial centers constructed or refurbished to function as nodes in the economic system.

Mesopotamian Empires

An important innovation was the system of large-scale deportations that began in the late twelfth century BCE (Oded 1979). Although these are described in the Assyrian royal inscriptions primarily as political or military maneuvers, they caused shifts in the demography that transformed the economy of the empire and literally changed the face of the state (Wilkinson et al. 2005). Instead of relying upon a gradual increase in population, Assyria was actively changing settlement patterns through relocation. Deportation formed a component in all the strategies (p. 142) mentioned above: agriculture and industry were boosted by the influx of laborers, provincial capitals were built and settled with deportees, and ambitious waterworks were constructed for the swelling agriculturalist population whose surplus production was used to support the burgeoning royal elite and army (Bagg 2000). Voluntary movement caused by tax incentives, work opportunities, or the prospect of trade may also account for some of the demographic shifts that took place on the imperial frontier, but this is less clear (Radner 2007).

It is uncertain whether the large expanses of new land that came under cultivation in theory all belonged to the crown (Postgate 1989), but it seems clear that many such estates ended up in private hands. During the late empire a growing proportion of the farmland came to belong to a group of people of mixed heritage, whose loyalty was directly tied to the Assyrian king. In return for their services they had large resources laid at their disposal, including the benefit of deported labor, irrigational works, and transport mechanisms. Wealth was polarized and concentrated in a small circle of people, many of them apparently with military titles (Kwasman and Parpola 1991; Fales and Postgate 1995; Mattila 2002).

In simple terms the imperial structure can be described as a system of provincial territories surrounded by client states, although in reality territorial dominance never became continuous or fully integrated. At a given point in time an inventory of the empire would include crown land, privileged cities, temple estates, territorial provinces, private lands, itinerant tribal groups, client communities, and semi-independent buffer states. Taxes were collected in the provinces, while tribute was imposed upon the outlying clients; tribute came under the direct jurisdiction of the crown and the governors collected the provincial taxes as part of their enterprise. Corvée labor and grain and straw taxes also applied to the provinces, and there were agents who gathered horses and raised levies of troops for the royal armies (Postgate 1974, 1979). Beyond the confines of the imperial provinces the economy of the subjugated areas varied according to local conditions.

The imperial army was grounded in a system of military standardization, skilled tacticians, a developed intelligence network, powerful siege equipment, and close combat units that surpassed those of any contemporary state in skill and number (Dalley 1995; Jakob 2003; Deszö 2006; Postgate 2007; Fales 2010). It incorporated contingents of infantry, chariotry, cavalry, and engineers and relied upon both Assyrian soldiers and auxiliary troops. Early on, most soldiers were drafted under the corvée system for limited periods of time during the year; veterans were settled in military settlements established

Mesopotamian Empires

on newly acquired territory. As more troops were required, even an extension of the *corvée* system beyond land-holding arrangements could not keep up with the demands of the expanding army.

Assyrian imperial administration left a much lower number of records than what is available from some of the preceding periods. Writing may have served primarily to pass on messages instead of being used in bookkeeping and the administration of resources as is known for instance from the Old Akkadian and Ur III empires. To some extent this impression is the result of developments in the writing system, since texts were increasingly written in the Aramaic language and (p. 143) on perishable materials. But it is equally clear that Assyrian management was hierarchal and based on an oral command structure grounded in personal relations of trust that would not always have required writing (Postgate 2007). The state archives do contain judicial records, administrative texts, decrees, state treaties, and even scholarly works, but their main bulk is made up by an extensive correspondence that bears witness to a complex hierarchy in which rank and status was linked directly to mandate. Many of the letters that ended up in the archives were produced lower down in the chain of command and appear to have been sent to the palace for final authorization. Through a strict but simple system centered on taxation, military service, *corvée*, and a direct line of authority that connected individual estates to the provincial governors, and the governors to the king, an effort was made to reduce the number of administrative procedures needed to move resources from their place of origin to their final destination.

The provincial governors also served as military commanders and facilitated diplomatic relations with neighboring foreign and client states. Examples of direct correspondence between heads of state are not as common as earlier on, and instead the governors would manage everyday contact and send reports to the capital as issues arose. The decentralized system would make use of a familiarity with local affairs and shorten response time, but the letters sent from provincial administrators also show that imperial policy was not left to individual interpretation. A basic course of action was charted from the capital and implemented through the governors.

Information would pass to and from the royal court by way of road stations, fast couriers, and professional spies. The imperial provinces, whose number varies greatly through history between a dozen to more than seventy (Radner 2006), were subdivided into districts managed by a hierarchy of civil servants that included superintendents, mayors, town managers, village inspectors, and fortress commanders. All state officers were in principle appointed directly by the king, but they were often actively promoted for royal approval by local authorities and served within their confines. Transcending local power structures were royally appointed delegates, who were sent out to act with supreme authority on specific matters. Cadres of civil servants, many of them eunuchs, ran the central and provincial administrations.

Mesopotamian Empires

Social classes below the elite are less easy to distinguish in the surviving evidence (Radner 1997). Local communities were headed by city elders or tribal leaders, and the coronation hymn refers to “the Great and the Small,” which had in Old Assyrian times been a class distinction between two groups that held a dissimilar status in legislation and civic government at Assur. A class of people referred to as “slaves” appear to have been individuals who had been indentured by themselves or a family member; they generally appear not to have been chattel slaves or prisoners of war (Radner 2003). They mostly appear in the possession of affluent urbanites, and they could themselves own property under the head of the household. On the other hand, it is hard to identify what became of the large groups of deportees that were transplanted by the empire. Prosopographical evidence suggests that the foreigners were integrated as imperial subjects, and that some may have been tied to the land they were put to work.

(p. 144) Legal institutions in a physical sense (e.g., court buildings) were not maintained by the state (Lafont 2003; Radner 2003), and the imperial administration would penetrate existing local systems of adjudication mainly through the appointment of key officials. Any relationship between central and local legislation is unclear, but the acknowledgment of existing community jurisdiction and enforcement of property rights was probably the rule. Arbitration could sometimes be provided and regulated by the state, and ideally the ruler functioned as supreme judge and highest court of appeal. The administrative and legal system is primarily known through private judicial documents and financial records, royal decrees, and letters. Only a single compilation of normative regulations known as the “Middle Assyrian Laws” (mostly eleventh-century BCE copies of fourteenth-century originals) survives from Assyria itself. This text is characterized by its brutality and principle of retaliation without a trace of the flexible system of arbitration and mediation evidenced in earlier Assyrian history (Hertel forthcoming). It is unclear whether the laws refer to actual practice or project a moral ideal. Taken at face value they present an image of a ruthless and misogynous society with less capacity for clemency than its historical predecessor.

In the client states local rulers would renounce their right to lead an independent foreign policy and agree to interact with their neighbors only through Assyrian mediation (Parpola 2003). In return for their loyalty, the empire would guarantee protection against foreign and domestic enemies and the assertion of local dynastic continuity. Subordinate elites were tied to the Assyrian king through redistribution of imperial revenue, public displays of friendship and alliance, the celebration of religious festivals, local grants of privilege, dynastic marriages, and the education of young nobles from the client states at the imperial court. Their vested interest in nurturing a close institutional and personal relationship with the empire was underlined in state treaties and reiterated at ceremonial gatherings at the royal capital. Children of client rulers were brought to live in the Assyrian palaces and would receive formal training as part of the cosmopolitan scene of the imperial court. Ideally they would become loyal subjects of the empire, who would one day return to rule their country of origin. Political refugees from rival states were

likewise stationed in the royal palaces, and Assyria kept a permanent store of disappointed claimants, defeated rebels, and dispossessed foreign rulers who supposedly held their allegiance to the crown, and who were ready to be used in negotiations or placed on their native throne with Assyrian support (Barjamovic 2012).

The management of the merchant communities was left particularly weak, and the capacity of frontier towns to act as interstitial ports of trade was actively promoted (Frankenstein 1979; Radner 2004). The Phoenician city-states in the Levant never became incorporated in the provincial system, and instead, Assyrian annexation presumably became an impetus for the Phoenician maritime expansion through the stability, investments, and market provided by the empire. Also the subjugated polities along the northern frontier toward Phrygia and Urartu were left under indirect rule. There, patron-client relations were established with local rulers to create a band of strategic buffer states between the two contending empires (Parker 2001).

(p. 145) Instead of turning them into a rallying ground for resistance, local civic institutions were normally left intact and the impact of the empire on existing social order was limited (Barjamovic 2004). Provincial towns and client states held virtual autonomy in communal matters, and many leaders were locally appointed with imperial approval. Ideally they were elected by their peers to act as an instrument of the community both internally and in relation to the central power. In reality, Assyrian policy actively sought to draw the loyalty of local leadership away from its constituency so as to penetrate and coordinate aspects of society to which the empire had only limited direct access. The process of submission could take place at any level in the social hierarchy, but the basic element of reciprocity remained the same: subjects were bound by oath to certain obligations, and they would receive a number of privileges in return. In reality a pro-Assyrian party seems to have existed in most places, ready to form partnerships built on mutually reinforcing strategies.

In addition to a policy based on voluntary cooperation, the empire actively pursued a coercive approach. In some situations it would take what it wanted by strength alone, giving little or nothing in return. Through systematic demonstrations of destruction and absurd cruelty in controlled doses, the empire would successfully build up an anticipation of violence. Hostages and kidnapped foreigners and gods were used to force reluctant polities into submission, or were taken for the purpose of a later exchange or trade of prisoners (Zawadzki 1995; Holloway 2002). But at the same time it was made clear that violence could be avoided by accommodation, and so the power to hurt was transferred into bargaining power. Detailed pictorial representations of torture and death shown in the Assyrian palace decorations are a product of this ideology. Scenes of rebellion and punishment were set in direct relation to each other; they were presented as inseparable and inevitable.

During the late empire period client states were transformed into provinces only as a last resort when they proved too unstable to control through indirect hegemony. In many cases revolts against central authority would result in the disloyal ruler being replaced

with a more devoted local subject. When a former client was turned into an imperial province, a governor was appointed and the population given status as imperial citizens and subjected to regular taxation. In the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions, the god Assur delivered the territory to Assyria “for administration and direction,” and the king would begin the task of “taking and reorganizing” the new land, to impose taxes and service “like Assyrians,” and “count its people as citizens of Assyria” (Machinist 1993; Parpola 2004, 13–14). A clear institutional hierarchy was imposed and implemented in places where it did not already exist, and local systems of labor, production, and military service were reorganized. Imperial control was reinforced by a manipulation of religious institutions and practices, such as through exceptional grants and privileges accorded to sanctuaries (Bidmead 2002; Holloway 2002). By this process Assyria gradually changed from what had in essence been a territorial core with an irregularly distributed outer network of provinces and clients connected by transportation and communication corridors (Parker 2001) into a more territorially integrated state (Radner 2004; Bedford 2009).

(p. 146) Propaganda and Piety

The imperial court formed the central component in the structure and organization of the empire. As a social institution it was set within the spatial framework of the royal palaces; physically it was a setting for the king and the imperial elite to interact, and the focal point of the imperial bureaucracy. The royal palaces were a main venue for the advertisement and manifestation of royal power and ideology, and a conspicuous backdrop for military reviews, political negotiations, and the reception of foreign dignitaries (Barjamovic 2011).

Assyria had several such royal and provincial palaces, and the imperial capital moved a number of times. During the early empire period Tukulti-Ninurta I had made an effort to move his residence from its traditional seat in Assur to a newly constructed city on the opposite bank of the Tigris River. He failed spectacularly, apparently due to the massive resistance of the urban elite of Assur. The first successful attempt to relocate the seat of royal power happened in the early ninth century BCE when Assurnasirpal II made the city of Kalhu his state capital. This move took place during the first wave of territorial expansion, which followed almost two centuries of contraction and political instability.

The urban layout and program of decoration found in the new royal palace at Kalhu reflects the confident self-perception of the reviving empire. It reinterpreted the traditional functions of a royal capital and publicized abstract concepts of rulership and universal dominance through the symbolic appropriation of space. The royal art was set to glorify the ruler and celebrate the universal empire; it emphasized social hierarchies and defined actions. It mobilized societal core ambitions, was a system of communication and representation, and was a means of state integration through the symbolic language of power (Liverani 1979; Reade 1979; Winter 1997). The medium for the monumental

Mesopotamian Empires

inscriptions was the cuneiform script; together with statuary and stone reliefs they formed an artistic unit set to convey the official notion of rulership, which justified political convergence as well as physical separation between ruler and ruled.

It is hard to say to what extent these factors combined to create a statewide identity across different segments of society, but clearly there were competing belief systems. The surviving correspondence between the kings and the royal scholars (Parpola 1993) suggests that opposing views were present even at court. The *Zeitgeist* may be reflected in the surviving literary works (Larsen 1993), including the comedy of social injustice and the battle against red tape known as the “Poor Man of Nippur,” the nihilistic piece on the absurdity of life referred to as the “Dialogue of Pessimism,” and the fatalistic “Poem of the Righteous Sufferer” (Lambert 1960, 33–39):

My God has forsaken me and disappeared...
My city frowns on me as an enemy;
Indeed my land is savage and hostile.
My friend has become foe,
My companion has become a wretch and a devil...
(p. 147) As I turn round, it is terrible, it is terrible...
What strange conditions everywhere!

A retinue of scholarly advisers guided royal decision making through the observation and analysis of omens and the performance of appropriate rituals (Radner 2011), and large libraries holding a range of scholarly works were assembled in the state capitals and the imperial palaces (Ryholt and Barjamovic forthcoming). This was the intellectual environment within which Assyrian imperial ideology was formed and transformed, a process that can at times be followed in the correspondence and reference libraries of the individuals involved. To what degree the narrative passages of the royal annals and carved scenes of the palaces were the result of the personal preference of the individual rulers is debatable, but the scholars and artisans surely worked for an audience whose essential values and ideas they would want to capture.

Assyrian imperial religion and ideology legitimized domination and provided a rationale for territorial growth, but a particular creed was never proselytized and political authority never sustained primarily through the use of military force (Holloway 2002). Religion was inclusive in character and the power of deities was always considered universal (Bottéro 2001), but in Assyria during the early empire period a theologization of the cult of Assur was introduced that promoted his image in particular as world ruler (von Soden 1963). Kingship had in essence been religious in character at least since the Old Assyrian Period (Labat 1939), but with the rise of the empire, the king’s role as interlocutor of Assur’s property became increasingly emphasized in state-sanctioned representations (Radner 2010; Parker 2011). The ruler was portrayed as the result of a separate act of creation, and sometimes stated to belong to a distinct physical category between god and mankind (Hrouda 1965; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1995). However, unlike Egypt and Hatti, deification of the king (living or dead) never took place in Assyria (Brisch 2008). The ruler was a physical agent, who was to act as link between humans

Mesopotamian Empires

and deities; he was presented alternately as a being of supernatural perfection and the humble shepherd under God's bidding. This function is emphasized in the Assyrian coronation hymn, in which mediation and the duty to promote social accord are central issues behind the divine appointment (Livingstone 1989, no. 11):

May the Small speak, and the Great listen!
May the Great speak, and the Small listen!
May concord and peace be established in Assyria!
Aššur is king!—Aššur is king!
Assurbanipal is the agent of Aššur,
the creation of his hands.

The historical role of the king as a *primus inter pares* that went back to a period when Assur had been a city-state thus remained conceptually intact even if it had become increasingly hypocritical in practice.

(p. 148) Continuity or Collapse

The fall of the Assyrian empire has been called a “historical scandal” due to its apparent inexplicability and suddenness (Garelli and Lemaire 1997, 123, 227). It fell into ruin within a generation of its peak and disappeared almost without trace after 1,500 years as a vivid political and cultural force. According to later tradition the catalyst for the downfall was a coalition of discontented Median and Babylonian tribal leaders (Zawadzki 1995; Liverani 2001), but in fact the empire had already been torn by civil wars and court rivalry for decades. It had survived several periods of internal weakness and dynastic strife during the course of its history, but the final two centuries had seen an unprecedented territorial expansion and political centralization that had brought about societal changes on a deeper level.

As the empire grew it became more dependent upon its ability to rule through existing local political and social structures; it had grown more inclusive and tolerant of regional variation within its frontiers at the expense of cultural integrity and bureaucratic homogeneity. The mass deportations had culminated during the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon, and Sennacherib and appear to have decreased during the final two generations of the empire. Perhaps they had proved too costly or too difficult to manage. Perhaps there were fewer people left to move. The great urban centers of Nineveh, Kalhu, and Arbela had grown to a point where they could no longer survive on their local agricultural production and had become dependent upon outside labor and provisions. In spite of the effort to create a physical infrastructure and use designated agricultural areas to intensify centralized production, the income that could be generated from the extensive newly subjugated areas may have proven lower than the cost of the required military presence.

Mesopotamian Empires

It also became increasingly difficult to isolate imperial clients from each other, and the upkeep of the civic privileges that were used to bargain for loyalty from local authorities would have been progressively more demanding on the state treasury. The system of royal patronage was strong at the center but not very far-reaching, and to penetrate underlying structures the empire made use of a developed network of resident state agents and actively sought to capitalize on local political dissent. Imperial attempts to control the periphery backfired, at least in part, due to the complex network of states and local political alliances surrounding Assyria that gradually came to be strengthened under imperial pressure. Indirect hegemony through local clients presumably began as a cost-effective approach but proved insufficient in the longer run. Eventually client states were either de facto abandoned (Central Anatolia, Egypt) or turned into imperial provinces (Cilicia, Commagene). Emphasis appears to have been placed upon security rather than an irregular income from outlying areas that were either too costly or too demanding to control. In essence, Assyrian imperialism became a self-perpetuating mechanism in search of security, resources, and, ultimately, a balance of power that could never be fully achieved.

The power struggles between city-states and tribal groups in the politically fragmented Babylonia became a particular stumbling stone for the Assyrians. (p. 149) The old urban centers of the south were widely held to be the cradle of culture by the Assyrians themselves, and there was always a certain fear of contact that resulted in an uneven policy toward the region (Frame 1992). Peace was preserved through an extensive grant of civic privileges and by actively manipulating Babylonian urban traditions of kingship in relation to the resident tribal groups (Barjamovic 2004). The urbanites traditionally defined themselves in political and cultural terms; their populations were multiethnic, proclaimed no common ancestry, and shared their language, religion, and culture with a number of other communities. Instead, they defined themselves on the basis of a political identity and local belonging, and were characterized by a formal and highly institutionalized type of community. The tribal groups (Aramean, Chaldean, and Arab) identified themselves by affiliation to a common ancestor. In many cases, they were led by a tribal council made up of the elders and leaders of the prominent lineages and headed by a chieftain. In most respects social power was centralized and rarely divided according to function.

An insulting letter sent from Assurbanipal to the “non-Babylonians of Babylonia” exemplifies Assyria’s Babylonian policy during the late empire period. The king rages against the tribal “non-Babylonians,” presenting them as politically illegitimate newcomers and pointing out that they can never be “proper.” He returns their proposal to negotiate with the words: “your letter is (nothing but) windy words and importunities” (Harper 1896, no. 403). The fact that the Assyrian tactic to divide and rule these two groups ultimately proved unsuccessful was detrimental to the empire and became an important reason for its downfall. After the devastating civil war of 652–648 BCE large parts of the population in Babylonia had become permanently alienated from

Mesopotamian Empires

the empire. In addition, a retaliatory attack that destroyed Elam for its support of Babylonia in the war led to a fundamental shift in the political power balance in the region east of Assyria and opened up its flanks to the emerging Iranian states.

The inner threat to the head of state by palace intrigue and dynastic squabble also meant that Assyria gradually came to hollow out its own infrastructure of power (Yoffee 1988). Until the mid-eighth century BCE, the provincial governors and high-ranking military officials held positions of political and social authority in Assyrian society, but beginning with the reforms of Tiglath-Pileser III the king in effect became an absolute ruler. The imperial magnates were dependent upon the king as a person and were without any claim to authority, for instance through a hereditary right. The uppermost echelon of Assyrian society in effect grew separate from its basis, while the latter appears to have had growing difficulties in meeting the requirements of the former.

The late Assyrian empire promoted the idea of a multinational state and increasingly came to invest its legitimacy directly in the public personality of the current ruler instead of the institution of monarchy. Considerable state funds were channeled into sustaining this creation and large amounts spent on prestigious building projects. This was a risky strategy and necessarily provisional. When Assurbanipal died in circa 627 BCE after almost four decades of rule, the transition of authority did not go smooth and, in reality, the empire never recovered.

(p. 150) When enemies struck a weakened Assyria, not only were the empire and state shattered, but the Assyrian heartland itself was reduced to its very basis of agricultural subsistence (Liverani 2001; Yoffee 2005). The population was probably no longer predominantly Assyrian, and the traditional nobility had been eliminated as a hindrance to royal centralization and military efficiency. This explains why Assyria disappeared so completely after its defeat. There were no structures of default to fall back on, nothing from which to build. There was no longer anything in Assyria that did not require the king's interference. And without a king there was no state.

The period that followed is almost entirely "dark" in relation to the core provinces of the former empire. In Babylonia, a dynasty based on a Chaldean tribal confederation rose to a status of world power (Joannès 2004, 127–128), and the sixth century BCE in the south became a period of economic and demographic growth and expansion, urbanization, and increased agricultural productivity (Jursa 2004; 2010). The new empire took over elements of the Assyrian political infrastructure, but in general it seems that outlying provinces had reverted to their constituent units and that Babylonian hegemony came from conquest and not as a legacy.

The period of the Babylonian empire has produced a great deal of evidence for private economic activity and specialization that suggests ways in which the economic setup was different in character from that of its Assyrian predecessor. In the south, where the city-states had remained strong and royal power always constituted a distinct domain in

relation to the cult, temple institutions played a central role in state economy and owned huge rural estates as well as a substantial amount of land within the city walls. They were the nexus of urban society (Waerzeggers 2011), and most citizens were affiliated with the temple in one way or another.

Unlike the fate that befell Assyria, the cities and temples of Babylonia survived the demise of the Chaldean dynasty and continued life under the changing rule of the Persian, Seleucid, and Parthian kings. The transformation from city-state to city was slow, and perhaps linked to a reversal in the prevailing trend of deurbanization. New farmland was opened up to agriculture through state-sponsored irrigational projects, and large populations converged in recently founded urban centers (Christensen 1993; Boiy 2004).

Concluding Remarks: The Imperial Experience in Mesopotamia

Imperialism in Mesopotamia was tied to an urban world; the populous city-states had been the dominant form of social and political organization since the late fourth millennium BCE, and they formed the essential component of any larger state to rise in the region. General patterns of interaction between the urban centers and imperial superstructures are visible already from the earliest example of (p. 151) an empire in Mesopotamia. One recurring ambition was to incorporate agricultural land beyond the reach of the system of city-states and fill out the physical and conceptual space between them. This suggests that the window of operation for the early empires was limited, and that the political strength and status of the urban communities was difficult to control or transgress. The continued reappearance of empires on the other hand implies that they had organizational capabilities beyond those of their constituent components: they could concentrate efforts into the control of labor for large building projects and increase agricultural production. The surplus generated by the imperial organization went into elite consumption and the upkeep of large military forces. To some extent this process would reinforce itself as long as the empire could provide stability and progress, but the moment this failed the state became exposed to internal dissolution and outside aggression.

The level of bureaucracy and administrative control characteristic of the early empires may be associated with the traditions of the city-states they grew out of. It diminished as political hierarchies became progressively more centered on the individual ruler, and the prevailing source of state income changed from systems of corvée, land tenure, and tariffs on production to an arrangement in which trade and production was left to entrepreneurs, traders, or estate managers and submitted to taxation. This created a system of financing without capital or initial credit, which carried little risk for the state

Mesopotamian Empires

even if it was less profitable than the direct systems of exploitation best illustrated by the Ur III example.

A characteristic feature of the Mesopotamian empires was their attempt to centralize production or at least the control of production. The phenomenon recurs in different forms down through time, but it became increasingly systematized in the late periods as whole areas of resource extraction were singled out to accommodate production on an industrial scale. The development was presumably bound up with a gradual move from direct state control, through institutional dominance, to a reliance upon entrepreneurial middlemen. While production was often directed to meet a particular demand, or used to produce marketable goods, commerce itself was generally left to its own devices and rarely became a matter of state interference. The development follows the general tendency that led from public and institutionalized systems subject to more rigorous control to a looser form of organization in which the state played no direct part and private entrepreneurs took over aspects of micromanagement. The physical separation of the trading communities into commercial ports or even disconnected twin settlements on a local level corresponds to the symbiotic but separate relationship that empires and ports of trade could have on a state level.

A key to understanding these developments is a complex dynamic interaction between the city-state and tribal communities that one can follow at least from the late third millennium BCE. Crone (1986) has argued that the early states did not develop out of tribes, and that tribal groups do not appear to have played any significant role in the state-formation process. To her, tribal organization was an alternative rather than a precursor to the state. The case of Mesopotamia suggests (p. 152) that the process is more complex, and that the interdependence of tribal and urban communities in network states, such as those of Zimrilim and Šamši-Adad of the early second millennium BCE, represent a transitional model of organization that transferred power from shared urban institutions and reinforced social and class divisions. A comparable dynamic may have applied in the formation of the Old Akkadian and Babylonian empires. If anything, an overview of Mesopotamian political history circa 3400–400 BCE illustrates the complexity of change and the multifaceted struggle for power and argues against any structural reductionism.

Territorial and political integration came increasingly into focus from the second half of the second millennium BCE as a dynamic system of crown land, private holdings, and systems of corvée gave way to larger estates run by servile labor. In Mitanni and early imperial Assyria this developed into what appears to have been a loosely tied manorial system, while Babylonia under Kassite rule went through a process of increased territorial integration and became characterized by a rising class of landed aristocracy. Both areas saw an emerging court culture that projected new ideologies of order and hierarchy, as well as a growing number of servile laborers who were privately owned or tied to the land they worked. By the end of the millennium, structures of centralized production became systematized through grand deportations and forced resettlements. This practice only appears to have fallen out of fashion in the late Assyrian Period, and

Mesopotamian Empires

deportations were mostly abandoned by the Achaemenid kings, suggesting that deportation had by then become less cost-efficient in the long run than the emerging strategy of outsourcing agricultural activities and building projects to private entrepreneurs.

In the early empires focus had been on the royal family and their interaction with elites from the traditional urban centers; the armies presented a system for social mobility. With the foundation of imperial court cities in the second half of the second millennium BCE, royal power was transferred from the centers of civic authority, and the period is characterized by a struggle between traditional urban elites, a landed aristocracy, and the royal court. The concept of itinerant courts, known, for example, from the Old Akkadian and Mitanni empires, was abandoned, and royal performance was centered on the royal capitals. A parallel process of ruralization and a concentration of labor in country estates led to a temporary weakening of the urban system. The landed aristocracy and royal courts gradually came to take over the role as key consumers and producers that had previously belonged to the great cities. A comparable decline in the importance of temple lands in southern Mesopotamia is discernible, although this proved not to be a unilateral development either. With the disintegration of central power in Babylonia in the eleventh century BCE, both processes were reversed; the city-states reemerged, and the central urban centers and their temples again became major landowners and key economic institutions in the south.

The impact of technological innovation on societal change appears to have been less significant than administrative developments. On a fundamental level, the main visible difference between the empires of the Bronze and Iron Age is one of geopolitics and progressive integration. The collapse of the state system in the (p. 153) twelfth century BCE left a political vacuum that was filled by reemerging city-states and small territorial units across most of the Near East. This presented a unique opportunity for the reexpanding Assyrian empire to include substantial territories and integrate populations with relative ease. In this it came to set a standard for what empires could achieve in terms of type, size, military organization, and royal power. The multicentered world of the Late Bronze Age, in which several players had to recognize mutual equality, gave way to a single dominant power, and the growth of an ideology of universal empire.

By the first millennium BCE Assyria had become entirely dominant in the Near East and had changed into an integrated multiethnic state ruled from an imperial court of grand proportions. Early on, ethnic background or kinship had been a central component of elite structure (Akkade, Mari, Mitanni, Kassite, early Assyrian), but with the progressive integration of foreign and local dignitaries, the Assyrian empire changed its focus to universality and ethnic pluralism centered on the patronage of the absolute ruler. The same approach was not reproduced in Babylonia, where royal power gradually became divided from the religious institutions, and local community authorities, ethnic leaders, and social corporations continued to play a vital role.

Mesopotamian Empires

The Achaemenid conquerors introduced a new order under which the center of political power lay in Iran; the Persians were the first foreign people to rule Mesopotamia who did not embrace its culture, and unlike the Assyrian and Babylonian kings, they reserved the highest offices in the empire to their own kinsmen. Yet, the new state in some ways came to represent the ultimate realization of a political ambition of unification that had its roots and tradition in the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia.

References

- Adams, R. McC. 1981. *Heartland of cities: Surveys of ancient settlement and land use on the central floodplain of the Euphrates*. Chicago.
- . 2007. *The limits of state power on the Mesopotamian plain*. Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin 2007: 1. http://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlb/2007/cdlb2007_001.html.
- Adams, R. McC., and H. J. Nissen. 1972. *The Uruk countryside: The natural setting of urban societies*. Chicago.
- Algaze, G. 1993. *The Uruk world system: The dynamics of expansion of early Mesopotamian civilization*. Chicago.
- Alster, B., and T. Oshima. 2007. "Sargonic dinner at Kaneš: The Old Assyrian Sargon legend." *Iraq* 69: 1-20.
- Bagg, A. M. 2000. *Assyrische Wasserbauten: Landschaftliche Wasserbauten im Kernland Assyriens zwischen der 2. Hälfte des 2. und der 1. Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* Mainz.
- Bahrani, Z. 2008. *Woman of Babylon: Gender and representation in Mesopotamia*. London.
- Bang, P. F., and C. A. Bayly. 2003. "Introduction: Comparing pre-modern empires." *Medieval History Journal* 6, no. 2: 169-187. (p. 154)
- Barjamovic, G. 2004. "Civic institutions and self-government in southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first millennium **BC**." In J. G. Dercksen, ed., *Assyria and beyond: Studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, 47-98. Leiden.
- . 2011. "Pride, pomp and circumstance: Palace, court and household in Assyria 879-612 **BCE**." In J. Duindam, T. Artan, and M. Kunt, eds., *Royal courts in dynastic states and empires—a global perspective*, 27-61. Leiden.
- . 2012. "Propaganda and practice in Assyrian and Persian imperial culture." In P. F. Bang and D. Kołodziejczyk, eds., *Universal empire: A comparative approach to imperial culture and representation in Eurasian history*, 43-59. Cambridge.

Mesopotamian Empires

- Beaulieu, P.-A. 2005. "World hegemony, 900–300 **BCE**." In D. C. Snell, ed., *A companion to the Ancient Near East*, 48–61. Oxford.
- Bedford, P. R. 2007. "The economy of the Near East." In J. G. Manning and I. Morris, eds., *The ancient economy: Evidence and models*, 58–83. Stanford, CA.
- . 2009. "The Neo-Assyrian empire." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires: State power from Assyria to Byzantium* 30–65. New York.
- Bidmead, J. 2002. *The Akītu festival: Religious continuity and royal legitimation in Mesopotamia*. Piscataway, NJ.
- Boiy, T. 2004. *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*. Leuven.
- Bottéro, J. 2001. *Religion in ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago.
- Brinkman, J. A. 1977. "Appendix: Mesopotamian chronology of the historical period." In A. L. Oppenheim, ed., *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a dead civilization*, 335–348. Chicago.
- . 1980. "Forced laborers in the Middle Babylonian Period." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 32: 17–22.
- . 1984. "Settlement surveys and documentary evidence: Regional variation and secular trend in Mesopotamian demography." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43: 169–180.
- Brisch, N. 2008. *Religion and power: Divine kingship in the ancient world and beyond*. Chicago.
- Cancik-Kirschbaum, E. 1995. "Konzeption und Legitimation von Herrschaft in neuassyrischer Zeit: Mythos und Ritual in VS 24, 92." *Die Welt des Orients* 26: 5–20.
- . 1999. "Nebenlinien des assyrischen Königshauses in der 2. Hälfte des 2." *Jt. Altorientalische Forschungen* 26: 210–222.
- Christensen, P. 1993. *The decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and environments in the history of the Middle East 500**B.C.** to **A.D.** 1500*. Copenhagen.
- Collins, P. 2000. *The Uruk phenomenon: The role of social ideology in the expansion of the Uruk culture during the fourth millennium **B.C.*** Oxford.
- Cooper, J. S. 1993. *The curse of Agade*. Baltimore.
- . 2004. "Babylonian beginnings: The origin of the cuneiform writing system in comparative perspective." In S. D. Houston, ed., *The first writing: Script invention as history and process*, 71–99. Cambridge.

Mesopotamian Empires

Crone, P. 1986. "The tribe and the state." In J. A. Hall, ed., *States in history*, 48–77. Oxford.

Dahl, J. L. 2007. *The ruling family of Ur III Umma: A prosopographical analysis of an elite family on southern Iraq 4000 years ago*. Leiden.

———. 2010. "A Babylonian gang of potters: Reconstructing the social organization of crafts production in the late third millennium **BC** southern Mesopotamia." In L. Kogan et al., eds., *Proceedings of the 53e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, 2: City administration in the Ancient Near East*, 275–305. Winona Lake, IN. (p. 155)

Dalley, S. 1995. "Ancient Mesopotamian military organisation." In J. M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 289–300. New York.

Deszö, T. 2006. "The reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian army as depicted on the Assyrian palace reliefs, 745–612 **BC**." *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 57: 87–130.

Doyle, M. W. 1986. *Empires*. Ithaca, NY.

Ellis, M. deJ. 1976. *Agriculture and the state in ancient Mesopotamia: An introduction to problems of land tenure*. Philadelphia.

Englund, R. K. 1990. *Organisation und Verwaltung der Ur III-Fischerei*. Berlin.

———. 1991. "Hard work: Where will it get you? Labor management in Ur III Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50: 225–280.

Fales, F. M. 2010. *Guerre et paix en Assyrie: Religion et impérialisme*. Paris.

Fales, F. M., and J. N. Postgate. 1995. *Imperial and administrative records, Part II: Provincial and military administration*. Helsinki.

Fleming, D. 2004. *Democracy's ancient ancestors: Mari and early collective governance*. Cambridge.

Foster, B. R. 1987. "The Late Bronze Age palace economy: A view from the east." In R. Hägg and N. Marinatos, eds., *The function of the Minoan palaces*, 11–16. Stockholm.

———. 1993a. "Management and administration in the Sargonic period." In M. Liverani, ed., *Akkad, the first world empire: structure, ideology, traditions*, 25–38. Padua.

———. 1993b. "International trade at Sargonic Susa." *Altorientalische Forschungen* 20: 98–102.

———. 1993c. *Before the Muses: An anthology of Akkadian literature*. Bethesda, MD.

Mesopotamian Empires

———. 2011. "The Sargonic period: Two historiographical problems." In G. Barjamovic et al., eds., *Akkade is king: A collection of papers by friends and colleagues presented to Aage Westenholz on the occasion of his 70th birthday, 15th of May 2009*, 135–145. Leiden.

Foster, B. R., and K. P. Foster. 2009. *Civilizations of ancient Iraq*. Princeton, NJ.

Frame, G. 1992. *Babylonia 689–627BC: A political history*. Leiden.

Frankenstein, S. 1979. "The Phoenicians in the Far West: A function of Neo-Assyrian imperialism." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 263–294. Copenhagen.

Freu, J. 2003. *Histoire du Mitanni*. Paris.

Garelli, P., and Lemaire, A. 1997. *Le Proche-Orient asiatique. Tome 2: Les empires mésopotamiens*. Israël. 3rd ed. Paris.

Gilb, C. L. 2005. *Toward holistic history: The odyssey of an interdisciplinary historian*. Atherton, CA.

Gitin, S. 1997. "The Neo-Assyrian empire and its western periphery: The Levant, with a focus on Philistine Ekron." In S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, eds., *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, 77–103. Helsinki.

Gledhill, J., and M. T. Larsen. 1982. "The Polanyi paradigm and the dynamics of ancient states: Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica." In C. Renfrew, M. Rowlands, and B. A. Segraves, eds., *Theory and explanation in archaeology: The Southampton conference*, 197–229. London.

Hansen, M. H. 2000. "Introduction: The concepts of city and city-state culture." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 11–34. Copenhagen. (p. 156)

———. 2002. "Introduction." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of six city-state cultures*, 7–21. Copenhagen.

Harper, R. F. 1896. *Assyrian and Babylonian letters belonging to the Kouyunjik collections of the British Museum. Part 4*. London.

Hertel, T. K., forthcoming. *Old Assyrian legal practices: Law and dispute in the Ancient Near East*. Leiden.

Holloway, S. W. 2002. *Aššur is king! Aššur is king! Religion in the exercise of power in the Neo-Assyrian empire*. Leiden.

Hrouda, B. 1965. *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes*. Bonn.

Mesopotamian Empires

- Hudson, M. 1998. "Land taxation in Mesopotamia and classical antiquity." In R. Andelson, ed., *Land-value taxation around the world*, 17–35. New York.
- Jakob, S. 2003. *Mittelassyrische Verwaltung und Sozialstruktur: Untersuchungen*. Leiden.
- Joannès, F. 2004. *The age of empires: Mesopotamia in the first millenniumBC*. Edinburgh.
- Jursa, M. 2004. "Grundzüge der Wirtschaftsformen Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr." In R. Rollinger and C. Ulf, eds., *Commerce and monetary systems in the ancient world: Means of transmission and cultural interaction*, 115–136. Stuttgart.
- . 2010. *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia in the first millenniumBC: Economic geography, economic mentalities, agriculture, the use of money and the problem of economic growth*. Münster.
- Kwasman, T., and Parpola, S. 1991. *Legal transactions of the royal court of Nineveh. Part 1: Tiglath-Pileser through Esarhaddon*. Helsinki.
- Labat, R. 1939. *Le caractère religieux de la royautéassyro-babylonienne*. Paris.
- Lafont, S. 2003. *Middle Assyrian Period*. In R. Westbrook, ed. *A history of Ancient Near Eastern law*. Vol. 1, 521–563. Leiden.
- Lambert, W. G. 1960. *Babylonian wisdom literature*. Oxford.
- Lamprichs, R. 1995. *Die Westexpansion des neuassyrischen Reiches: Eine Strukturanalyse*. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany.
- Larsen, M. T. 1967. *Old Assyrian caravan procedures*. Leiden.
- . 1976. *The Old Assyrian city state and its colonies*. Copenhagen.
- . 1979. "The tradition of empire in Mesopotamia." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 85–100. Copenhagen.
- . 1988. "Literacy and social complexity." In J. Gledhill, B. Bender, and M. T. Larsen, eds., *State and society: The emergence and development of social hierarchy and political centralization*, 173–191. London.
- . 1993. "The collapse of civilizations: The case of Mesopotamia." In J. C. V. Johansen, E. L. Petersen, and H. Stevnsborg, eds., *In Clashes of cultures: Essays in honour of Niels Steensgaard*, 107–129. Odense.
- . 2000. "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 117–127. Copenhagen.
- Leemans, W. F. 1960. *Foreign trade in the Old Babylonian period as revealed by texts from southern Mesopotamia*. Leiden.

Mesopotamian Empires

Liverani, M. 1973. "Memorandum on the approach to historiographic texts." *Orientalia* 42: 178-194.

———. 1979. "The ideology of the Assyrian empire." In M. T. Larsen, ed. *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 297-317. Copenhagen.

———. 1984. "The growth of the Assyrian empire on the Habur/Middle Euphrates area: A new paradigm." *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 2: 81-98. (p. 157)

———, ed. 1993. *The first world empire: Structure, ideology, traditions*. Padua.

———. 2001. "The fall of the Assyrian empire: Ancient and modern interpretations." In S. E. Alcock et al., eds., *Empires: Perspectives from archaeology and history*, 374-391, 444. Cambridge.

———. 2005. "Imperialism." In S. Pollock and R. Berbeck, eds., *Archaeologies of the Middle East: Critical perspectives*, 223-243. Malden, MA.

———. 2006. *Uruk: The first city*. London.

Livingstone, A. 1989. *Court poetry and literary miscellanea*. Helsinki.

Machinist, P. 1993. "Assyrians on Assyria in the first millennium **B.C.**" In K. Raaflaub, ed., *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen*, 77-104. Munich.

Mann, M. 1984. "The autonomous power of the state: Its origins, mechanisms and results." *Archives européennes de sociologie* 25: 185-213.

———. 1986. *The sources of social power*. Vol. 1: *A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge.

Mattila, R. 2002. *Legal transactions of the royal court of Nineveh. Part 2: Assurbanipal through Sin-šarru-iškun*. Helsinki.

Michalowski, P. 2011. *The correspondence of the kings of Ur: An epistolary history of an ancient Mesopotamian kingdom*. Winona Lake, IN.

Nissen, H. 1986. "The archaic texts from Uruk." *World Archaeology* 17: 317-334.

———. 1988. *The early history of the Ancient Near East, 9000-2000 **B.C.*** Chicago.

Oded, B. 1979. *Mass deportations and deportees in the Assyrian empire*. Wiesbaden.

Olmstead, A. T. 1918. "The calculated frightfulness of Ashur Nasir Apal." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 38: 209-263.

Owen, D. I., and R. H. Mayr. 2007. *The Garšana archives*. Bethesda, MD.

Mesopotamian Empires

Parker, B. J. 2001. *The mechanics of empire: The northern frontier of Assyria as a case study in imperial dynamics*. Helsinki.

———. 2011. "The construction and performance of kingship in the Neo-Assyrian empire." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67: 357–386.

Parpola, S. 1993. *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian scholars*. Helsinki.

———. 2003. "International law in the first millennium." In R. Westbrook, ed., *A history of Ancient Near Eastern law*. Vol. 2: 1047–1063. Leiden.

———. 2004. "National and ethnic identity in the Neo-Assyrian empire and Assyrian identity in post-empire times." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18, no. 2: 5–49.

———. 2007. "The Neo-Assyrian ruling class." In T. Kämmerer, ed., *Studien zu Ritual und Sozialgeschichte im Alten Orient: Tartuer Symposien, 1998–2004*, 257–274. Berlin.

Pollock, S. 2001. "The Uruk period in southern Mesopotamia." In M. S. Rothman, ed., *Uruk Mesopotamia and its neighbors: Cross-cultural interactions in the era of state formation*, 181–231. Santa Fe, NM.

Postgate, J. N. 1974. *Taxation and conscription in the Assyrian empire*. Rome.

———. 1979. "The economic structure of the Assyrian empire." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 193–222. Copenhagen.

———. 1989. "The ownership and exploitation of land in Assyria in the 1st millennium **BCE**." In M. Lebeau and P. Talon, eds., *Reflets des deux fleuves: Volume de melanges offerts à André Finet*, 141–152. Leuven.

———. 1992. "The Land of Assur and the yoke of Assur." *World Archaeology* 23, no. 3: 247–263.

———. 1995. "Royal ideology and state administration in Sumer and Akkad." In J. M. Sasson, ed., *Civilisations of the Ancient Near East* (New York), 395–411. (p. 158)

———. 2001. "System and style in three Near Eastern bureaucracies." In S. Voutsaki, J. T. Killen, eds., *Economy and politics in the Mycenaean palace states*, 181–194. Cambridge.

———. 2007. "The invisible hierarchy: Assyrian military and civilian administration in the 8th and 7th centuries **BC**." In J. N. Postgate, ed., *The Land of Assur and the yoke of Assyria: Studies on Assyria 1971–2005*, 331–360. Oxford.

———. 2008. "The organization of the Middle Assyrian army: Some fresh evidence." In P. Abrahams and L. Battini, eds., *Les armées du Proche-Orient Ancien: IIe-Ier Mill. av. J.-C.*, 83–92. Oxford.

Potts, D. T. 1999. *The archaeology of Elam: Formation and transformation of an ancient Iranian state*. Cambridge.

———. 2006. "Elamites and Kassites in the Persian Gulf." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 65, no. 2: 111–119.

Radner, K. 1997. *Die neuassyrischen Privatrechtsurkunden als Quelle für Mensch und Umwelt*. Helsinki.

———. 2003. "Neo-Assyrian Period." In R. Westbrook, ed., *A history of Ancient Near Eastern law*. Vol. 2: 883–910. Leiden.

———. 2004. "Assyrische Handelspolitik: Die Symbiose mit unabhängigen Handelszentren und ihre Kontrolle durch Assyrien." In R. Rollinger and C. Ulf, eds., *Commerce and monetary systems in the ancient world: Means of transmission and cultural interaction*, 152–169. Stuttgart.

———. 2006. "Provinz. C. Assyrien." In M. P. Streck, eds., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie, Band 11, Lieferung 1/2: Prinz, Prinzessin—Qattara*, 42–68. Berlin.

———. 2007. "Hired labour in the Neo-Assyrian empire." *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 16: 185–226.

———. 2010. "Assyrian and non-Assyrian kingship in the first millennium **BC**." In G. B. Lanfranchi and R. Rollinger, eds., *Concepts of kingship in antiquity*, 15–24. Padua.

———. 2011. "Royal decision-making: Kings, magnates, and scholars." In K. Radner and E. Robson, eds., *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture*, 358–379. Oxford.

Radner, K., and E. Robson, eds. 2011. *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture*. Oxford.

Reade, J. E. 1979. "Ideology and propaganda in Assyrian art." In M. T. Larsen, ed., *Power and propaganda: A symposium on ancient empires*, 329–343. Copenhagen.

Runciman, W. G. 2011. "Empire as a topic in comparative sociology." In P. F. Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary empires in global history*, 99–107. London.

Ryholt, K., and G. Barjamovic, eds. Forthcoming. *Libraries before Alexandria*. Oxford.

Sallaberger, W. 2007. "From urban culture to nomadism: A history of Upper Mesopotamia in the late third millennium." In C. Marro and C. Kuzucuoglu, eds., *Sociétés humaines et changement climatique à la fin du troisième millénaire: une crise a-t-elle eu lieu en Haute Mésopotamie?*, 417–456. Istanbul.

Sallaberger, W., and A. Westenholz. 1999. *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*. Freiburg.

Salvini, M. 1995. *Geschichte und Kultur der Urartäer*. Darmstadt.

Smith, A. T. 2003. *The political landscape: Constellations of authority in early complex polities*. Berkeley, CA.

Stein, G. 1999. *Rethinking world-systems: Diasporas, colonies, and interaction in Uruk Mesopotamia*. Tucson, AZ. (p. 159)

Steinkeller, P. 1981. "The renting of fields in early Mesopotamia and the development of the concept of interest in Sumerian." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24: 113-145.

———. 1987. "The administrative and economic organization of the Ur III state: The core and the periphery." In McG. Gibson and R. D. Biggs, eds., *Aspects of bureaucracy in the Ancient Near East*, 19-41. Chicago.

———. 1993. "Early political development in Mesopotamia and the origins of the Sargonic empire." In M. Liverani, ed., *Akkad, the first world empire: Structure, ideology, traditions*, 107-129. Padua.

———. 1999. "Land-tenure conditions in southern Babylonia under the Sargonic dynasty." In B. Böck et al., eds., *Munuscula Mesopotamica: Festschrift für Johannes Renger*, 553-572. Münster.

———. 2004. "Toward a definition of private economic activity in third millennium Babylonia." In R. Rollinger and C. Ulf, C., eds., *Commerce and monetary systems in the ancient world: Means of transmission and cultural interaction*, 91-111. Stuttgart.

———. Forthcoming. "Corvée labor in Ur III times." In S. Garfinkle and M. Molina, eds., *New perspectives on the Ur III period*. Madrid.

Stol, M. 1995. "Old Babylonian corvée (tupšikkum)." In P. J. van den Hout and J. de Roos, eds., *Studio historiae ardens: Ancient Near Eastern studies presented to Philo H. J. ten Cate on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, 293-308. Leiden.

Studevent-Hickman, B. 2006. "The organization of manual labor in Ur III Babylonia." Unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University.

Tenney, J. S. 2011. *Life at the bottom of Babylonian society: Servile laborers at Nippur in the 14th and 13th centuries B.C.* Leiden.

Tenu, A. 2009. *L'expansion médio-assyrienne: Approche archéologique*. Oxford.

Thuesen, I. 2000. "The Neo-Hittite city-states." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 43-55. Copenhagen.

Vallat, F. 1998. "Elam i: The history of Elam." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 15 December 1998 (available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elam-i).

Mesopotamian Empires

- van De Mieroop, M. 1999. *Cuneiform texts and the writing of history*. London.
- Veenhof, K. R., and J. Eidem. 2008. *Mesopotamia: The Old Assyrian Period*. Freiburg.
- von Dassow, E. M. 2010. *State and society in the Late Bronze Age: Alalah under the Mittani empire*. Bethesda, MD.
- . 2011. "Freedom in Ancient Near Eastern societies." In K. Radner and E. Robson, eds., *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture*, 205–224. Oxford.
- von Soden, W. 1963. "Die Assyrier und der Krieg." *Iraq* 25: 131–144.
- Waerzeggers, C. 2011. "The pious king: Royal patronage of temples." In K. Radner and E. Robson, eds., *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture*, 725–751. Oxford.
- Warburton, D. A. 2003. *Macroeconomics from the beginning—the general theory, ancient markets, and the rates of interest*. Neuchâtel.
- Waters, M. W. 2000. *A survey of Neo-Elamite history*. Helsinki.
- Westenholz, A. 1984. "The Sargonic period." In A. Archi, ed., *Circulation of goods in non-palatial context in the Ancient Near East*, 17–30. Rome.
- Westenholz, J. G. 2010. "Historical events and the process of their transformation in Akkadian heroic traditions." In D. Konstan and K. A. Raaflaub, eds., *Epic and history*, 26–50. London.
- Wilhelm, G. 1989. *The Hurrians*. Warminster, UK.
- Wilkinson, T. J., E. Wilkinson, J. Ur, and M. Altaweel. 2005. "Landscape and settlement in the Neo-Assyrian empire." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 340: 23–56. (p. 160)
- Winter, I. J. 1981. "Royal rhetoric and the development of historical narrative in Neo-Assyrian reliefs." *Studies in Visual Communication* 7: 2–38.
- . 1996. "Sex, rhetoric, and the public monument: The alluring body of the male ruler in Mesopotamia." In N. B. Kampen et al., eds., *Sexuality in ancient art*, 11–26. Cambridge.
- . 1997. "Art in empire: The royal image and the visual dimensions of Assyrian ideology." In S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, eds. *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, 359–381. Helsinki.
- Wittfogel, K. A. 1957. *Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power*. New Haven, CT.

Mesopotamian Empires

Yoffee, N. 1988. "The collapse of ancient Mesopotamian states and civilization." In N. Yoffee and G. Cowgill, eds., *The collapse of ancient states and civilizations*, 44–68. Tucson, AZ.

———. 2005. *Myths of the archaic state: Evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations*. Cambridge.

Zaccagnini, C. 1999. "Features of the economy and society of Nuzi: An assessment in the light of recent research." In D. I. Owen and G. Wilhelm, eds., *Nuzi at seventy-five*. Bethesda, MD.

Zawadzki, S. 1995. "Hostages in Assyrian royal inscriptions." In K. van Lerberghe and A. Schoors, eds., *Immigration and emigration within the Ancient Near East*, 449–458. Leuven.

Zimansky, P. 1985. *Ecology and empire: The structure of the Urartian state*. Chicago.

Gojko Barjamovic

Gojko Barjamovic is Assistant Professor of Assyriology at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen. His main areas of research are early Assyrian history, society, and economy.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Anatolian States

Trevor Bryce

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0006

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores the history of state formation in the Anatolian States, focusing on the Hittite state, which it explains arose in north-central Anatolia early in the Late Bronze Age while the Middle Bronze Age saw the rise of an Indo-European dynasty. It also considers the role of Pithana and his son and successor Anitta in establishing the first great Anatolian empire and the conquests made by the Hittites.

Keywords: state formation, Anatolian States, Hittite state, Indo-European dynasty, Pithana, Anitta, Anatolian Empire, Hittites

The Hittites

Historical Background

The Hittite state arose in north-central Anatolia (modern Turkey) early in the Late Bronze Age, probably during the first half of the seventeenth century BCE. The name “Hittite” is derived from Old Testament references to a small Iron Age Canaanite tribe living in Palestine. These biblical Hittites in fact had little or no connection with the Late Bronze Age Anatolian peoples to whom we now apply the term. The latter simply referred to themselves as “the people of the land of Hatti”; they defined themselves not by any ethnic designation, but by reference to the land in which they lived. The name “Hatti” applied primarily to the region defined by Anatolia’s longest river. Now called the Kızıl Irmak (“Red River”), the Hittites called it the “Marassantiya”; in Classical times, it was known as the “Halys.” The river has its source near Turkey’s border with Armenia, and after describing a great southward curve through the north-central region of the Anatolian plateau it empties into the Black Sea northwest of modern Samsun. It has a total length of approximately 1,050 kilometers. The region within it was originally the homeland of a pre-Indo-European people, the Hattians, who may have lived there for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years before the arrival of Indo-European newcomers probably during the Early Bronze Age (third millennium BCE). One branch of these newcomers occupied territories lying to the east and southeast of the Halys basin, and one of their principal settlements was the city Kussara, probably located in the anti-Taurus range. By the end of the third millennium BCE, they were in regular and apparently peaceful contact with the Hattians, from whom they adopted (p. 162) many cultural, social, and religious traditions. But they also preserved a number of their Indo-European traditions, most notably their Indo-European language, which they called “Nesite” (Map 5.1)



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 5.1 The World of the Hittites. Map edited by G. Barjamovic.

In the first three centuries of the second millennium BCE, known as the Middle Bronze Age, the Assyrians established a network of merchant colonies in eastern Anatolia, which traded tin and textiles in exchange for silver and gold with the local Anatolian kingdoms, including the kingdom of Hatti. This period also saw the rise of an Indo-European dynasty based originally in Kussara,

which reestablished itself in the city Nesa (Kanesh, mod. Kültepe) just south of the Halys River. The Assyrians had already established here the headquarters of their commercial operations in Anatolia. Nesa thereupon came to be identified with the dynasty, as

Anatolian States

reflected in the name “Nesite,” which throughout the subsequent history of the Hittite world was used to designate the official language of the Hittites. The two most important rulers of the Indo-European dynasty, Pithana and his son and successor Anitta, established the first great Anatolian empire. On a stele set up at the gate of his city, Anitta recorded, in the Indo-European Nesite language, his conquest of the entire Halys basin region as far north as the Black Sea, and in the other (p. 163) direction, the region extending southward to the Salt Lake (Neu 1974). Hattus, capital of the kingdom of Hatti, was one of the victims of Anitta’s campaigns. The city was razed to the ground. The site was declared accursed, and sown with weeds; it was never again to be resettled. Turbulent conditions throughout eastern Anatolia around the middle of the eighteenth century BCE, generated very likely by conflicts of the kind in which Anitta engaged, led to the Assyrians’ withdrawal of their colonies and the collapse of the empire that Anitta had built up.

In the early decades of the seventeenth century BCE, however, a new dynasty emerged in eastern Anatolia, its original seat probably being located in the city of Kussara. This dynasty ushered in the era of the kingdom of the Hittites, which for much of the Late Bronze Age (from the seventeenth to the early twelfth century BCE) dominated the Anatolian peninsula. At the height of its power in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE, it also held sway over substantial parts of northern Syria and some territories beyond the Euphrates in northern Mesopotamia. One of the earliest members of this dynasty was a man called “Hattusili I” (ca. 1650–1620 BCE). He is the first Hittite king with whom written records can be directly associated, though there were at least two previous rulers of the dynasty from which he came. Hattusili is generally credited with refounding the city Hattus, now called “Hattusa,” in defiance of the curse that Anitta had imposed upon it during the previous century. Though some scholars question whether he was in fact the city’s refounder, there is no doubt that he was responsible for its first major development and above all for its establishment as a royal capital. Henceforth, Hattusa became the administrative and religious center of the Hittite kingdom for almost all of its history.

This kingdom had small and shaky beginnings. It was but one of a number of petty states in its region that were in constant conflict, vying with one another for political and military supremacy. Hittite records report that one of Hattusili’s royal predecessors, a man called “Labarna” (probably his grandfather), succeeded in uniting his family and the whole of the small kingdom beneath his leadership before embarking upon a series of conquests that gave him supreme rule over large parts of eastern Anatolia as far south as the Mediterranean Sea (Hoffmann 1984, 12–15). Hattusili consolidated his predecessor’s Anatolian conquests, and then launched a series of campaigns into northern Syria (Bryce 2005, 70–72, 76–83). Here he confronted the powerful kingdom of Yamhad, whose chief city Aleppo he failed to capture, probably after repeated attempts. But Hattusili claimed conquests even further afield, on at least one occasion crossing the Euphrates and penetrating deep into northern Mesopotamia. His grandson and successor Mursili I followed in his footsteps, again campaigning in Syria where he captured Aleppo and destroyed it. While the city still smoldered, Mursili marched eastward to the Euphrates

Anatolian States

River and south along the river to Babylon. He seized, plundered, and destroyed the city (ca. 1595 BCE), thus bringing to an end the dynasty of Hammurabi, before returning home with the spoils of battle (Bryce 2005, 97–100).

These conquests of Hattusili and Mursili established Hatti as one of the Great Kingdoms of the Near Eastern world. During the Late Bronze Age, there were (p. 164) four such kingdoms: until the middle of the fourteenth century BCE, Hatti, the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni, Egypt, and the Kassite kingdom of Babylonia; from the mid-fourteenth to the early twelfth century BCE, Hatti, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylonia. Assyria had replaced Mitanni in the list of Great Kingdoms after the destruction of the Mitannian empire by the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I (ca. 1350–1322 BCE). The rulers of these kingdoms formed a kind of exclusive club. They often corresponded with one other, exchanged diplomatic missions, and referred to one another as “My Brother.” As with the other superpowers of the age, the fortunes of Hatti waxed and waned dramatically through the 500 years of the Late Bronze Age kingdom’s existence. And on at least two occasions before its final collapse, the kingdom came very close to extinction. We shall consider below the factors that elevated it to superpower status as well as those that led to its fragmentation and collapse.

The Royal Dynasty

From the beginning of its recorded Late Bronze Age history, the land of Hatti was ruled by a monarchy. Whether or not the king was originally elected, as some scholars have suggested, the very first references we have to the Hittite monarchy indicate that the person actually sitting upon the throne believed he alone had the right to decide who his successor would be, choosing him from among the members of his own family. That the royal succession was a privilege confined to a small group of families related by blood or by marriage was apparently never in dispute. But contests did arise over who, within these families, would actually occupy the throne after the death of its incumbent. In theory, the king was the appointee of the gods. He ruled by divine right and his person was sacrosanct. In practice, there is never any suggestion that the gods played a role in the selection of a new king. From the time of Hattusili I onward, the king simply proclaimed who his successor would be—unless circumstances prevented him from doing so (see below)—though he may well have sought divine endorsement for his decision through oracular consultation or other means. Hattusili summoned an assembly of his leading nobles and military officers to inform them that he had rejected his nephew, the previously named heir to the throne, and appointed his grandson Mursili in his place. Hattusili had called the group together not to seek approval for his decision but rather to extract from them a pledge of allegiance to his new appointee. All this is recorded in a document commonly referred to as the *Testament* of Hattusili (Hallo and Younger 2003, 79–81).

Mursili did in fact succeed his grandfather and went on to enjoy a distinguished military career. But the royal succession remained a highly contentious issue, and for the next seventy years it was determined by a series of palace coups. These began when Mursili was assassinated by his brother-in-law Hantili (ca. 1590 BCE), who seized the throne for himself. Hantili too was eventually overthrown and murdered by his son-in-law Zidanta, the next in the line of kings who usurped (p. 165) his way onto the throne. The last of the usurpers, Telipinu (ca. 1525–1500 BCE), who recorded the disasters of his predecessors' reigns in a document commonly called *The Proclamation of Telipinu* (Hoffmann 1984), sought to stabilize his position, and to secure the throne for his descendants, by establishing fixed principles of succession:

Let a prince, a son of the first rank, become king. If there is no prince of the first rank, let him who is a son of the second rank become king. But if there is no prince, no heir, let them take an *antiyant*-husband* for her who is a daughter of the first rank, and let him become king. (*Proclamation* §28, II 36–39)

The aim of these provisions was to ensure that the succession would in future be limited to the incumbent's lineal descendants. But there was a let-out clause: In the event of a king having no male heir, kingship could pass to a daughter's husband who had "entered into" the king's family. In effect, a son-in-law could become a son of the king by adoption, and thus be entitled to inherit the throne.

This succession law was not entirely successful in preventing future royal coups. But it is remarkable that, with the exception of a couple of possible interlopers, the Hittite throne remained within the one small family group throughout the whole history of the Hittite kingdom. Indeed this royal dynastic line continued to be in evidence for several generations beyond the collapse of the Hittite empire, in the period of the so-called neo-Hittite kingdoms of eastern Anatolia and northern Syria. Earlier Hittite kings frequently included the name "Labarna" in their nomenclature. This became a royal title, adopted from the first king whose personal name was Labarna—much as the title Caesar was adopted by Roman emperors.

What were the ethnic origins of the royal dynasty? There has long been a view that the Hittite kingdom began when an Indo-European ethnic group imposed its dominance upon the native Hattic population of north-central Anatolia. In fact, by the beginning of the second millennium BCE the population of this region, which became the core territory of the Hittite kingdom and is now often now referred to as the Hittite homeland, was probably a composite of many peoples from different parts of the Near Eastern world, speaking a range of languages. Already in the kingdom's early years, Hattic, Indo-European (including Luwian), Hurrian, and very likely other ethnic elements were present within the region defined by the Marassantiya/Halys River. Certainly, the official language of the Hittite kingdom was the Indo-European language called "Nesite." But this may not have been the most widely spoken language in the homeland, let alone the kingdom at large. On the other hand, its use *may* reflect the ethnic origins of the royal dynasty that established its control over the kingdom in the first half of the seventeenth

century BCE. But it has also been argued that some of the Hittite kings were of Hattic origin—on the basis of their names, like Mursili, Huzziya, and Telipinu. That begs an important question, for the origins of these and other person-names have yet to (p. 166) be conclusively established. In any case, the derivation of a name need not reflect the ethnicity of the person who bears it. The most likely conclusion is that ethnic identity played at most only a very minor role in the administrative and social structure of the Hittite kingdom in its core region.

In the first century or so of the kingdom, the monarch occasionally called together an assembly called the *panku*, a term that in origin is a Hittite adjective meaning “all, entire.” The *panku* was apparently made up of personnel of the royal staff, including highly placed members of the palace administration. It exercised certain advisory and supervisory functions during Hattusili I’s reign, and in Telipinu’s reign was assigned important disciplinary powers, designed primarily to ensure the implementation of the rules of royal succession. But subsequently, very little is heard of the *panku*, and almost certainly the institution had been abolished or had at least faded into oblivion, by the end of the period commonly designated as the Old Kingdom (ca. 1400 BCE). (For more on the *panku*, see Beckman 1982.)

The Role of the Gods

The king ruled as absolute monarch of his realm, subordinate and accountable only to the gods, whose deputy he was on earth. The king himself was never accorded divine status during his lifetime, though after his death he joined the ranks of the gods and was the beneficiary of a cult established in his honor. A king is frequently referred to on his death as “becoming a god.” During his lifetime, he was the chief priest of his realm, and as such was expected to participate in the kingdom’s most important religious festivals. This was no small responsibility. Up to 165 festivals were incorporated into the official calendar, and the king’s presence was required at many of them—even if at times this meant cutting short a military campaign to ensure his availability. Much of the king’s time was occupied with annual pilgrimages to the holy cities of his realm, like Arinna and Nerik.

A storm god and a sun goddess were the most prominent deities in the Hittite pantheon, but there were dozens of regional variants of these and other deities throughout the realm. Each king also had a special patron deity who protected him through his life and ran before him in battle. Thus Ishtar was the patron of the thirteenth-century BCE king Hattusili III, and the storm god of lightning the patron of his son and successor Tudhaliya IV. Each new conquest swelled the ranks of the kingdom’s deities, as those of the conquered states were added to the pantheon. It was the Hittites’ proud boast that they were the people of a thousand gods. This boast was on the one hand a clear demonstration of Hittite religious tolerance and the respect the Hittites accorded to all deities, whatever their origin. On the other hand, it had good propaganda value, emphasizing as it did the wide spread of territories over which the Hittites held sway. Yet so large an accumulation of gods made the pantheon increasingly unwieldy. This

prompted Puduhepa, wife of Hattusili III and a former Hurrian priestess, to embark upon a rationalization (p. 167) of the pantheon, which she began by syncretizing its most important deities. The storm god was equated with Hurrian Teshub, and the sun goddess of Arinna with Hepat. The syncretization process also illustrates the increasing Hurrianization of Hittite culture in the final century of the Hittite empire, particularly in the reigns of Hattusili III and Tudhaliya. The finest surviving example of this is the Hittite rock sanctuary now called Yazılıkaya (Turkish for “inscribed rock”) near the Hittite capital Hattusa. Two files of deities are depicted there, males and females separately in the Hurrian manner, in Hurrian garb and with Hurrian names.

The Acquisition of Empire

The size of the territory ruled by the kings of Hatti fluctuated dramatically throughout the kingdom’s history. As we have noted, in the reign of Suppiluliuma I the kingdom of Hatti reached the height of its power and influence in the Near East, controlling an empire extending from the Aegean coast of Anatolia eastward to the western fringes of Mesopotamia, and southward through Syria-Palestine to the region of Damascus, where Egyptian-controlled territory began. There were four main components of the empire: (1) the core homeland territory, located in the region defined by the Marassantiya River; (2) buffer territories that lay to the east and southwest of the homeland, and were sometimes regarded as an integral part of it—the so-called Upper and Lower Lands; (3) a network of vassal states in Anatolia and northern Syria; (4) viceregal kingdoms at Carchemish and Aleppo in Syria, the viceroys being members of the king’s direct family line; and in the thirteenth century BCE, the appanage kingdom in southern Anatolia called “Tarhuntassa,” ruled by a member of a collateral branch of the royal family.

The acquisition by military force of the subject territories that constituted their empire was in large measure a necessity imposed upon the Hittites. Inhabitants of a land virtually surrounded by hostile neighbors, and with no significant natural defenses, they were obliged to take on the role of aggressors, partly as a means of ensuring their survival. Their king was also their leader in war, and could spend a significant part of almost every year of his reign on active campaign. Of necessity, prowess in the field of battle was one of the most important qualities of a good king, and indeed an essential component of the ideology of kingship. Demonstration of this quality required a king to match, and if at all possible to surpass, the achievements of his predecessors. On major operations, the king himself led his troops on campaign and into battle. There were, however, occasions when he delegated military command to a subordinate—often a member of his own family, generally one of his brothers or sons. On a number of occasions, a brother of the king who held the highly prestigious post of *GAL MESHEDI* (chief of the bodyguards) conducted a major military campaign on the king’s behalf. Other members of the Hittite nobility were assigned major military roles, sometimes as divisional commanders within an army under the leadership of the king or a prince, sometimes (p. 168) as the leaders of smaller-scale military expeditions sent against an

enemy or a rebel vassal state. But even when he was not leading a campaign, the king closely monitored all aspects of it through regular exchanges of messages and bulletins with the field commander.

There is no doubt that Hittite armies were generally highly disciplined and efficient, and could move with great rapidity to regions where campaigns were to be conducted. And in the majority of such campaigns, they appear to have been resoundingly successful—when they were able to confront their enemies in set battles. They were apparently less successful in conducting siege warfare and in subjugating areas where the enemy engaged in guerilla-type warfare. They also suffered several major reverses in conflicts with other Great Kingdoms, notably Mitanni early in Suppiluliuma I's reign, Egypt early in the reign of Muwattalli II, and Assyria in the reign of Tudhaliya IV. The core of the Hittites' defense force was a full-time, professional standing army, made up partly of levees imposed upon the subject states. The troops in this army were on year-round service. They were quartered in military barracks, and so could be promptly mobilized. Civilians could also be called up for major military campaigns. Between the full-time professional army and the civilian soldiers, there was a category of what we might call "reservists" or "territorials." These men were almost certainly better trained than the civilian soldiers, and probably served in the army on a fairly regular basis during the campaigning season. The payment they received was in the form of land assigned to them by the king. The produce of this land was supposed to support them and their families throughout the year. The army's elite force was its chariot contingent. In the thirteenth century, the Hittites developed the use of three-man chariots, whose crew consisted of a driver, a fighter armed with spear and bow and arrow, and a defender equipped with a shield. We do not know how effectively this somewhat cumbersome unit performed in the field of battle against the conventional two-man chariots used, for example, by the Egyptians.

The size of the armies that Hittite kings sent or led on campaign is largely a matter of conjecture (see Beal 1992, 291–296). Expeditionary forces dispatched against rebellious vassals or hostile independent states probably numbered between 5,000 and 10,000 troops, depending on the strength of the enemy, the extent to which they were supported by other states in the region, and the extent to which the Hittites could call upon the support of loyal vassals in the region. For a major engagement against a foreign Great King, the Hittites undoubtedly put a much larger force in the field. In the battle of Qadesh, fought between the Hittite king Muwattalli II and the pharaoh Ramesses II in 1274 BCE, Ramesses reports that the total Hittite forces numbered no less than 47,500, including some 3,500 chariotry and 37,000 infantry.

The first Hittite campaigns in northern Syria, in the reigns of Hattusili I and Mursili I, may have been intended in part to secure control over the routes that passed through Mesopotamia and Syria. The Hittites may well have relied on these routes for their supplies of a number of commodities, most notably tin, an essential ingredient in the production of bronze. During the Middle Bronze Age, Assyrian merchants had provided the Anatolian kingdoms with tin, which came to (p. 169) Mesopotamia probably from

Anatolian States

sources in Afghanistan and was then conveyed along the routes that linked Mesopotamia with Anatolia. If, as seems likely, the Hittites were dependent on the same sources for their supplies of tin (for possible Bronze Age tin sources in Anatolia, see Kaptan 1995), they may well have been obliged to establish an effective presence in the Syrian region to ensure these supplies were not denied them by an enemy power. Campaigns of conquest and destruction in the region by early kings, like Hattusili, Mursili, and Tudhaliya I, were the prelude to the establishment of more permanent authority over the northern Syrian states by later Hittite kings. But these early campaigns were very likely also undertaken to offset the threat to the Hittite homeland of the Hurrians who were rapidly spreading through northern Mesopotamia, northern Syria, and eastern Anatolia. A number of the Hurrian states had, by the end of the sixteenth century BCE, amalgamated into a single political federation called the “kingdom of Mitanni.” This kingdom posed the greatest threat to the Hittite world until its destruction by Suppiluliuma I.

Military campaigns also provided an important source of revenue for the Hittite king. Though he was the absolute and supreme ruler of the Hittite world, his authority depended very largely on the support of a powerful aristocracy. Its ranks included wealthy landowners, who had in many cases received their estates from the king as a reward for services rendered. They provided the king with a large part of his officer class, and expected to receive from him a generous share of the booty resulting from military conquest. In accordance with the “ethics” of warfare, an enemy or rebel city that surrendered without resistance to a Hittite army on campaign was spared destruction and plunder, provided it henceforth acknowledged the Hittite king as its overlord and paid whatever tribute was required of it. But if a city had to be taken by force, then it was looted and torched, and its inhabitants massacred or transported back to the homeland of its conqueror. Much of the booty from plundered cities and states in fact consisted of livestock and human transportees. The latter, who presumably were made up of the able-bodied inhabitants of a conquered region—men, women, and children—were resettled in various parts of the homeland, including underpopulated frontier areas that were prone to incursions by hostile groups, like the Kaska tribes from the Pontic mountain zone along the southern coast of the Black Sea. Many of the male transportees were recruited into the king’s militia. Others were pressed into service in the kingdom’s numerous temple establishments. A large number of the transportees, together with cattle and sheep from the conquered lands, were regularly allocated by the king to his land-owning officers to restock their estates.

The Maintenance of Empire

The importance of transportation as a means of boosting the homeland population can scarcely be overestimated. The constant demands imposed upon this population by yearly military campaigns, sometimes hundreds of kilometers from their place of origin, must seriously have affected the kingdom's ability to defend its (p. 170) own frontiers. On a number of occasions, an enemy exploited the king's absence on a major military expedition to cross the inadequately protected frontiers and occupy or ravage the fields and towns lying within it. The demands of military campaigns must also have significantly depleted the homeland's agricultural force, particularly at times when the king ordered a general call-up of able-bodied men to supplement the forces of his professional army. In the last century of the empire, the homeland appears to have become increasingly dependent on the importation of grain from abroad to feed its population. This may have been due in part at least to the redeployment, from the fields, of increasing numbers of yeomanry for military service, as the defense of the realm came under ever greater pressure from rebel states and outside forces.

Manpower shortages and the problems of providing adequate defense for the homeland while the main defense force was away very likely explains why Hittite kings often preferred to resolve a dispute with a foreign ruler or rebel vassal by negotiation rather than by military conflict. While the success of the kingdom of Hatti in establishing itself as the dominant power in Anatolia for much of its 500-year existence rested ultimately on brute force, its rulers' skills in the art of diplomacy must also be reckoned as a major factor in this success. The clearest reflection of these skills can be seen in the treaties which Hittite kings drew up with their vassals (Beckman 1999). Hittite sovereignty over vassal states was generally imposed in the wake of military conquest. The vassal states were assigned to the control of local rulers, whose obligations to their overlord were carefully spelled out in treaties, each a personal compact drawn up by the Hittite king with his vassal ruler. The most important of these obligations were military. The vassal was obliged to provide troops to fight alongside Hittite forces whenever he was called upon to do so, particularly when Hittite campaigns were being conducted in his region. He was forbidden to enter into independent relationships with foreign powers or to have independent political or military dealings with the rulers of other vassal states. And he was obliged to act as a local intelligence agent, informing his overlord without delay of any anti-Hittite political or military activities in his region. Other obligations commonly involved an annual payment of tribute to Hattusa.

It should be stressed that the treaties were agreements between two persons, overlord and vassal, not between two states. The vassal swore allegiance to his overlord and pledged support for the latter's successors in his direct family line. Should the Hittite throne be seized by a usurper, the treaty became null and void, except that the vassal might be called upon to help restore the legitimate king to his throne. In return for the fulfillment of his treaty obligations, the vassal was guaranteed sovereignty in his kingdom, and also the sovereignty of his legitimate successors in his direct family line.

Anatolian States

Apart from the obligations imposed by treaty upon him, the vassal ruler was allowed a high degree of autonomy in the administration of his state. Probably, this was due less to a liberal policy by Hittite kings toward their vassal states than to practical necessity. The Hittite kingdom lacked both the administrative machinery and the (p. 171) manpower necessary to administer and control its vassal territories directly. It was only in the Syrian viceregal seats at Carchemish and Aleppo that direct Hittite rule over territories outside the homeland region was established. Even the stationing of Hittite garrisons in the subject territories was a rare occurrence, generally confined to regions that were considered particularly volatile and that lay near the homeland's frontiers.

The fact that a number of vassal rulers, particularly in western Anatolia, violated their oaths and rebelled against Hittite rule, or were overthrown by anti-Hittite elements in their states, might be seen as indicating that the treaty system was very limited in its effectiveness. This is true up to a point. But the system did succeed in establishing relatively long periods of stability in some of the more fractious of the Hittites' subject territories, thus reducing the need for repeated Hittite campaigns in these territories. And in the last two centuries of the Late Bronze Age, the Hittites' vassal states in northern Syria provided an important bulwark against a resurgence of Egyptian territorial expansion north of Damascus.

Peace accords and strategic alliances established by a number of Hittite kings with their foreign counterparts also played a significant part in the maintenance of Hittite power and influence in the Near Eastern world. After the famous battle of Qadesh, fought between the Hittite king Muwattalli II and the pharaoh Ramesses II in 1274 BCE, relations between Hatti and Egypt improved to the point where in 1259 BCE a treaty was drawn up between Ramesses and Muwattalli's brother and second successor Hattusili III (Beckman 1999, 96–100). The somewhat strained relations between the two royal courts prior and subsequent to the conclusion of this, the so-called Eternal Treaty, are reflected in the large body of surviving correspondence that passed the two kings and other members of their families (Edel 1994). Like the Amarna correspondence of the previous century, the letters from the mid-thirteenth-century BCE Hittite-Egyptian corpus illustrate the importance of international diplomacy in maintaining peace between the Great Kingdoms of the Near East for much of the Late Bronze Age. Wars between the major powers of the age were remarkably few and far between.

The Administration of the Kingdom

Just as he dealt directly with his vassal rulers, so too in the administration of his homeland regions the Hittite king dealt on a one-to-one basis with many of his officials, both in the capital Hattusa and in the homeland's regional centers. The former included the *hazannu*, the "lord mayor," or chief administrator of Hattusa, who had particular responsibility for the security of the capital. The latter included an official called the *BĒL MADGALTI* (Hittite *auriyas ishas*; lit., "lord of the watch-tower"), a term used of the king's district governors. The duties and obligations of these officials included the security of

the frontiers; command of the garrisons stationed in the area; the maintenance of buildings, roads, and irrigation (p. 172) canals; management of the king's lands and collection of his taxes; the upkeep and restoration of temples; and a range of judicial functions that entailed traveling around their districts to preside at local assizes.

The relationship between the king and his various officials was regulated by sets of instructions that spelled out the latter's official duties and obligations. Twenty or so of these documents have survived (von Schuler 1957). A firsthand record of day-to-day administration in the kingdom's regional centers is provided by letters, or bulletins, found in the archives of several of these centers, excavated in comparatively recent times—namely Ortaköy (Hittite Sapinuwa), Kuşaklı (Sarıssa), and Maşat (Tapikka) (Bryce 2003, 170–181). The letters were written by the king to his local officials, or by the local officials to their king, or by Hattusa-based officials to local officials, or by local officials in one region to their counterparts in other regions. Their contents range widely, but above all they provide a firsthand view of the conditions, problems, and dangers confronting the king's civil and military appointees in these regions.

Most of our information about the Hittite imperial administration, both within the homeland and the subject territories, is based on the thousands of fragments of clay tablets discovered in the palace and temple archives of the capital Hattusa. The tablets are inscribed with the cuneiform script, adopted from the scribal schools of northern Syria probably as a result of Hittite contact with the region during the campaigns of Hattusili I. The tablets range widely in content. They include religious, mythological, and literary texts; a collection of laws; correspondence with foreign and vassal rulers; treaties; and administrative texts. As we have noted, the Indo-European Nesite language was the official chancellery language of the Hittite kingdom. But seven other languages are represented in the archives, including Luwian, Hattic, and Akkadian. The last of these was the international language of diplomacy in the Late Bronze Age, and was used by the Hittite administration in correspondence and treaties with foreign rulers, and with the Hittites' vassal rulers in Syria. The Nesite language was used for diplomatic communications with the vassal rulers of western Anatolia. Alongside the cuneiform script, a Luwian hieroglyphic script (once referred to as "Hittite hieroglyphic") was used for recording inscriptions in the Luwian language on stone monuments and on seals used by royalty and other elite members of the Hittite social and administrative hierarchy. The majority of hieroglyphic inscriptions, which are found throughout Anatolia and northern Syria, date to the thirteenth century BCE, and in greater numbers to the so-called neo-Hittite period from circa 1100 to 700 BCE (Hawkins 2000).

Literacy in the Hittite world, as elsewhere in the Late Bronze Age Near East, was confined largely to a class of professional scribes, though a small range of other persons, including doctors and ritualists, must also have been literate (Bryce 2002, 56–71). The scribes were employed in both palace and temple bureaucracies. An indication of their numbers is provided by the fact that at least fifty-two scribal staff are recorded in a text found in a building complex associated with the Temple of the Storm God in Hattusa. There were thirty other known temples in (p. 173) Hattusa, each of which very likely had

a scribal establishment. The staff of scribes employed in the palace bureaucracy was no doubt considerably larger than all of them. There must have been a clear hierarchy within the scribal class. At the bottom end would have been journeyman clerks employed in the largely routine, mechanical tasks of copying texts and filing and retrieving documents from the archives. At the top end were scribes who played a major role in the imperial administration, preparing drafts of treaties and other important documents for the king's consideration, and more generally serving in the ranks of the king's closest advisers. A number of them must also have participated in Hittite diplomatic missions to foreign courts. The best known of all Hittite scribes was a man called "Mittannamuwa," who rose to the exalted position of "great scribe" (GAL DUB.SAR) and was subsequently appointed by Muwattalli II as administrator of Hattusa when Muwattalli transferred the royal capital to Tarhuntassa in southern Anatolia.

In addition to his roles as chief priest of the Hittite world and commander-in-chief of its armies, the king was the supreme judicial authority in the land. His judicial responsibilities included the arbitration of disputes between vassals, the hearing of appeals against judgments made by lower courts, and the conduct of cases that had to be referred directly to him for judgment. Sorcery and illicit sexual practices, including bestiality and incest, were included in this last category. These and all other offenses subject to capital punishment had to be referred to the king's court, for the king alone had the right to pronounce sentence of death. In practice, he must have delegated many of his judicial responsibilities, as indeed a number of his administrative and diplomatic responsibilities, to other persons. Members of his own family, including the Syrian viceroys, were probably the main delegates in all these areas. Hattusili III's consort Puduhepa was actively involved in the administration of justice throughout the realm, sometimes in association with her husband, sometimes judging cases on her own, as her husband's deputy. This was but one of the areas in which she played a major role in the kingdom's affairs, figuring prominently in other contexts as chief priestess of the Hittite realm and as an international diplomat who corresponded on equal terms with the pharaoh Ramesses II. She was also responsible for engineering a number of royal marriage alliances. Her prominence in Hittite affairs was in part due to her position as the reigning queen. This position was sometimes formally designated by the title "Tawananna." Its holder, almost always the king's chief wife, was high priestess of the Hittite realm. She could be highly influential in other areas of the kingdom's activities and retained her position for the whole of her life, even if she outlived her husband.

More generally, judicial responsibilities were exercised by a range of officials. These included provincial governors, as noted above, and at a lower level, Councils of Elders. Probably consisting of the heads of prominent local families—wealthy local landowners and the like—the councils appear to have had a range of judicial and religious responsibilities, but were subordinate to the governors of the regions in which their communities were located.

(p. 174) Our knowledge of Hittite law depends in the main on a collection of 200 laws, surviving in fragmentary copies in a number of versions, the earliest of which goes back to the middle of the seventeenth century BCE (Hoffner 1997). There may well have been even earlier versions. The Hittite collection appears to be essentially a compilation of legal precedents. Unlike Hammurabi's laws, there is no preamble attached to it, no suggestion that it was divinely endorsed or inspired by any underlying set of moral or philosophical principles. Nor was it ever presented in monumental form for public display. This may have been at least partly because the collection was never a static entity, but rather a series of guidelines that underwent a number of modifications in later versions. The main drift was toward less severe penalties for offenses committed, replacing, for example, punishment by mutilation in a number of cases with payment of a fine, and a marked reduction in the number of offenses that attracted the death penalty. This in fact illustrates one of the Hittite laws' most characteristic features. In contrast to Hammurabic law, the emphasis in Hittite law was not on retributive justice or vengeance for its own sake but rather on fair compensation to the victim of an offense, to be made by the person who committed an offense against him. It is a good example of Hittite pragmatism. The amount of compensation was determined by a range of factors, including the status of both the offender and the victim. The laws make clear that every member of the state had a right to the protection of the laws. But justice was not even-handed in its application. A distinction was drawn between slave and free. Thus compensation imposed for offenses against the former were generally only half that imposed for offenses against the latter.

The term "slave" (IR₃) as used in the laws *may* have applied to any persons in Hittite society who were the property of a master, including the large numbers of transportees who were part of the spoils of Hittite military campaigns and were assigned to estate owners in the homeland. The constant importation of such persons into the homeland, particularly in the late fourteenth and early thirteenth centuries BCE, must have had a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the region. If we can trust his figures (as we probably can), the Hittite king Mursili II (ca. 1321–1295 BCE) regularly brought back thousands, sometime tens of thousands, of transportees in the wake of his annual military campaigns conducted in rebel and enemy territory. We cannot be sure that the ideogram IR₃, as used in the laws, does in fact apply to transportees (who are otherwise scarcely mentioned in the document) as well as to slaves acquired by other means (e.g., through debt-slavery; see Hoffner 2002, 186–187). But in any case, the persons so designated seem to have enjoyed a relatively high degree of freedom, which included the right to own and accumulate property, and to contract a marriage with persons of free status, with the prospect of producing free offspring. It is impossible to say whether these provisions in the laws reflect typical or atypical practice in Hittite society. The latter may well be so since it is clear that many of the laws were concerned with reporting decisions handed down in specific cases where exceptional circumstances were involved.

(p. 175) Hittite texts tell us little about the economic basis of Hittite society. It is clear, however, that this basis was primarily agricultural, and that a large percentage of the population lived off the land. The produce of this land, including its cattle and sheep, its crops and orchards, generated much of the taxes and revenues collected by the state. There is little evidence of wealth acquired from mineral sources, and as we have noted, much if not all of the tin required for the production of bronze had to be imported into the Hittite world, probably from sources much further to the east. Plunder and tribute from the vassal states no doubt constituted a significant source of income in the heyday of Hittite military campaigns, particularly in the second half of the fourteenth and the early years of the thirteenth century BCE. But by and large the Hittite economy appears not to have been a significantly diversified one. There is very little evidence that the Hittites engaged in mercantile activities on any significant scale, and the fact that the homeland was landlocked meant that the Hittites could never engage directly in seagoing enterprises. The likelihood is that international trade, which brought goods to the Hittite homeland, was largely in the hands of foreign entrepreneurs. (On merchants in the Hittite world, see Bryce 2002, 87–97; Hoffner 2002).

We have noted that in its final decades, the homeland seems to have found it increasingly difficult to feed its population from its own resources and became increasingly dependent on the importation of grain from outside sources, notably from Egypt and the kingdom's Levantine states. The recently excavated grain silos in the Hittite capital, if datable to this period, may well reflect additional measures taken by the last Hittite kings to stockpile grain in anticipation of continuing shortfalls in local production. The disruption of shipping routes in the eastern Mediterranean by pirates and probably other forces hostile to Hatti, and apparent shortfalls in grain production in the Syro-Palestinian states, may well have helped precipitate a crisis of major proportions in the final years of the Hittite kingdom's existence. A number of explanations have been offered for the kingdom's fall in the early twelfth century BCE. Most of these—prolonged drought, local uprisings, earthquake, invasions by outsiders, and so forth—should be related to the widespread upheavals that brought to an end many of the Bronze Age centers of power throughout the Aegean and Near Eastern worlds. But in addition, it now seems increasingly likely that major divisions within the ranks of Hittite royalty also contributed to the kingdom's collapse (see Bryce 2007).

As for the capital, a recent reassessment of the material remains of Hattusa in its final years has led to the conclusion that the city was not suddenly destroyed in a single cataclysmic attack upon it, as once believed. Rather, it was abandoned before such an attack took place, by its royal family and other members of the administrative elite who presumably reestablished themselves in another location yet to be identified (Seeher 2001). It was in the wake of this abandonment that Hattusa apparently fell victim to marauders who left the city in ruins.

(p. 176) **The Neo-Hittite Successors**

Anatolian States

The collapse of the Hittite empire in the early twelfth century BCE left a power vacuum in Anatolia, particularly on the plateau, which was largely filled in the early Iron Age by the kingdom of Phrygia (see below). Many Hittite towns and cities had been abandoned, their inhabitants seeking new lands to settle, within the context of the massive population movements associated with the so-called Sea Peoples of Egyptian records. On the other hand, a number of principalities arose in eastern Anatolia and northern Syria in the wake of the fall of Hatti. Now commonly referred to as the “neo-Hittite kingdoms,” they were in effect the Iron Age successors of the Late Bronze Age kingdom of the Hittites (see Bryce 2012). Some had their origins in Bronze Age cities and states; others appear to have been new foundations. But all of them preserved in modified form many Hittite cultural traditions, for up to 500 years after Late Bronze Age Hatti’s disappearance.

South of the Halys River extending through the region of the Hittite Lower Land was the country called “Tabal” (biblical Tubal). Initially, Tabal consisted of a series of small, independent principalities, which had by the end of the eighth century BCE amalgamated into two relatively major kingdoms: in the north, the kingdom sometimes now referred to as “Tabal proper” (Assyrian Bit-Burutash); in the south, the kingdom of Tuwana, which covered the region of the classical Tyanitis. In Anatolia’s southeast, the kingdom of Que emerged, originally extending over much of Late Bronze Age Kizzuwadna, and later referred to as “Hume” in Neo-Babylonian texts. To the west of Que lay the kingdom of Hilakku, covering much of the territory of classical Cilicia Aspera. Carchemish, located on the west bank of the Euphrates and formerly a viceregal seat of the Hittite empire, was the center of the most important neo-Hittite kingdom. Other neo-Hittite kingdoms in the Taurus and northern Syrian regions included Melid (modern Arslantepe), Gurgum (modern Maraş), Kummuh (later Commagene), Til Barsip (modern Tell Ahmar), and Hamath (modern Hama).

The language, culture, and ethnicity of at least some of these reflect a relatively smooth transition from their Bronze Age predecessors. Luwian was widely spoken in the region, if we can so judge from the distribution of Luwian inscriptions throughout the neo-Hittite centers. The Luwian hieroglyphic script now completely superseded the old cuneiform script in written records. (For the corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions, see Çambel 1999; Hawkins 2000). Continuity is also illustrated by direct family links between the Late Bronze Age Hittite royal dynasty and a number of the neo-Hittite rulers. Thus Talmi-Teshub, who was viceroy at Carchemish during the reign of the last Hittite king Suppiluliuma II, and great-great-grandson of Suppiluliuma I, was succeeded by his son Ku(n)zi-Teshub, whose grandsons were kings of Melid. Very likely a number of groups from the old Hittite homeland, particularly the elite elements of Hittite society, found a new home for themselves in Carchemish. The strong links with Bronze Age Hittite cultural traditions in the neo-Hittite world may well have been due largely to their (p. 177) preservation by such elements who sought to maintain in their new environment whatever they could bring with them from their old.

Anatolian States

But the neo-Hittite states were never closely united politically. Their relative cultural coherence was also progressively weakened, as illustrated by the gradual replacement of the Luwian language by Phoenician and Aramaic. Many of the distinctive features of the neo-Hittite civilization began to yield to Aramaean influence as the Aramaean presence became ever more prominent in the region. And the more distinctive features of traditional Hittite art and architecture were increasingly modified by their intermixture with Syrian and Assyrian elements. Lack of political unity among the neo-Hittite kingdoms is generally seen as the chief reason for their eventual disappearance as they were incorporated, one by one, into the Assyrian empire. The last of them fell to the Assyrian king Sargon II between 717 and 708 BCE.

Phrygia

On the Anatolian plateau, the Phrygians were the most important of the Late Bronze Age Hittites' successors (for a general account of them, see Mellink 1991). According to Greek tradition, they were immigrants into Anatolia from Macedon and Thrace. Homer's references to them in the *Iliad* imply that they were already well established in their homeland by the end of the Late Bronze Age. But the likelihood is that their migration took place during the upheavals associated with the end of the Bronze Age in the twelfth century. By the last decades of the second millennium BCE, a Phrygian state was beginning to evolve. With its capital at Gordion, located on the Sakarya (classical Sangarius) river, circa 100 kilometers southwest of Ankara (see Voigt 1997), this state reached the peak of its development in the eighth century. Phrygian power now extended eastward across the Halys River into what had been the homeland of the Late Bronze Age Hittite kingdom. The former Hittite capital Hattusa may by the eighth century BCE have become a largely Phrygian settlement, as indicated by the architecture and ceramic ware of the period, and by the establishment in the city of the cult of Cybele, the Phrygian mother-goddess. Other former Hittite settlements that the Phrygians occupied within the Halys basin include Gavurkalesi (anc. name unknown), site of a Hittite sanctuary 60 kilometers southwest of Ankara; Alaca Höyük, probably the sacred Hittite city Arinna, 25 kilometers north of Hattusa; and Tapikka (modern Maşat), located 116 kilometers northeast of Hattusa and once a provincial center of the Hittite homeland.

At some point in their history, the Phrygians became associated with a people called the "Mushki," already attested in Assyrian texts from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE (Grayson 1991, 33). The nature, date, and origins of the Phrygian-Mushki association are still matters for debate (Kossian 1997). But a (p. 178) widely held view is that toward the end of the eighth century BCE, an amalgamation took place between Phrygian and Mushki groups. The union was almost certainly due to a Mushki king called Mita, better known by his Greek name Midas (Sams 1995). From his capital at Gordion, Mita/Midas ruled a kingdom that extended eastward toward the Euphrates River,

southward into the region later known as Cappadocia, and westward as far as the Aegean Sea.

The Phrygians belonged to the Indo-European-language-speaking peoples, as indicated by two sets of their inscriptions, unfortunately only partly intelligible. The first set, found mainly on the facades of rock-cut monuments, date from the eighth to the third centuries BCE, and the second, consisting mainly of curse formulae, to the second and third centuries CE.

References

Beal, R. H. 1992. *The organisation of the Hittite military*. Heidelberg.

Beckman, G. M. 1982. "The Hittite assembly." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102: 435-442.

———. 1986. "Inheritance and royal succession among the Hittites." In H. A. Hoffner and G. M. Beckman, eds., *Kaniššuwar: A tribute to Hans G. Güterbock on his seventy-fifth birthday*, 13-31. Chicago.

———. 1999. *Hittite diplomatic texts*. 2nd ed. Atlanta.

Bryce, T. R. 2002. *Life and society in the Hittite world*. Oxford.

———. 2003. *Letters of the great kings of the ancient Near East*. London.

———. 2005. *The Kingdom of the Hittites*. New ed. Oxford.

———. 2007. "The secession of Tarhuntassa." In Detlev Groddek and Marina Zorman, eds., *Tabularia Hethaeorum: Hethitologische Beiträge Silvin Košak zum 65. Geburtstag*, 119-129. Wiesbaden.

———. 2012. *The world of the neo-Hittite kingdoms*. Oxford.

Çambel, H. 1999. *Corpus of Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions. Vol. 2. Karatepe-Aslantaş*. Berlin.

Edel, E. 1994. *Die ägyptische-hethitische Korrespondenz aus Boghazköi in babylonischer und hethitischer Sprache*. 2 vols. Opladen.

Grayson, A. K. 1991. *The royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian periods. Vol. 2: Assyrian rulers of the early first millennium B.C.I (1114-859)*. Toronto.

Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. 2003. *The context of scripture. Vol. 2*. Leiden.

Hawkins, J. D. 2000. *Corpus of Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions. Vol. I*. Berlin.

Hoffmann, I. 1984. *Der Erlass Telipinus*. Heidelberg.

Hoffner, H. A. 1997. *The laws of the Hittites: A critical edition*. Leiden.

———. 2002. "Some thoughts on merchants and trade in the Hittite kingdom." In T. Richter et al., eds., *Kulturgeschichten: Altorientalische Studien für Volkert Haas zum 65. Geburtstag*, 179–189. Saarbrücken.

Kaptan, E. 1995. "Tin and ancient mining in Turkey." *Anatolica* 21: 197–203.

Kossian, A. V. 1997. "The Mushki problem reconsidered: Studi Micenei ed Egeo" *Anatolici* 39: 253–266. (p. 179)

Mellink, M. J. 1991. "The native kingdoms of Anatolia." In J. Boardman et al., eds., *The Cambridge ancient history*. Vol. 3.2. 3rd ed., 619–665. Cambridge.

Neu, E. 1974. *Der Anitta-Text*. Wiesbaden.

Sams, G. K. 1995. "Midas of Gordion and the Anatolian kingdom of Phrygia." In J. M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. 2, 1147–1159. New York.

Schuler, E. von. 1957. *Hethitische Dienstanweisungen für höhere Hof- und Staatsbeamte*. Graz.

Seeher, J. 2001. *Die Zerstörung der Stadt Hattusa*. In Wilhelm, G., ed., *Akten des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Hethitologie, Würzburg, 4.–8., Oktober 1999*, 623–634. Wiesbaden.

Voigt, M. M. 1997. "Gordion." In E. M. Meyers, ed., *The Oxford encyclopedia of archaeology in the Near East*. Vol. 2, 426–431. New York.

Notes:

(*) I.e., a husband who enters into and therefore "becomes a member of the wife's family in inversion of the usual custom" (Beckman 1986, 17).

Trevor Bryce

Trevor Bryce is Professor Emeritus at the University of Queensland. He has published extensively on the Ancient Near East.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Jewish States

Seth Schwartz

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Middle Eastern Languages and Culture, Greek and Roman Law,
Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0007

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the formation of Jewish states, discussing the geography and phenomenology of the Jewish states, and the relation between ethnos and state. It highlights the incomplete consolidation of Judaism as the normative ideology of the Jews in the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods, describes the Hasmonean state under Herod, and identifies the factors that contributed to state formation.

Keywords: Jewish states, geography, phenomenology, ethnos, Judaism, Hasmonean state, Herod, state formation

Geography

To the extent that the Jews constituted a meaningful state in antiquity, it tended to be based in the small district of Judaea, at the center of the interior hill-country of Palestine. The district's northern boundary, beyond which lay Samaria, was near the modern city of Ramallah, about 20 kilometers north of ancient Jerusalem; to the west it extended to but did not include the Mediterranean coastal plain, which belonged in the early Iron Age to the Philistines, a people of Aegean origin, and later to the Phoenicians and after 300 BCE to the territories of Greek cities. To the east Judaea rather suddenly petered out into wilderness east of the high ridge of the Judaeian highlands, a line about 700 to 900 meters in altitude running due south roughly from Ramallah and through Jerusalem to the ridge's loftiest point near Hebron. The Judaeian Desert was harsh and arid but never rain-free, and it was punctuated by prosperous oases like Jericho (Baly 1984, 1-24). To the south Judaea had once reached such remote Negev settlements as Arad and Be'er-sheva, but under the Achaemenids if not earlier the Jews' very close kin, the Edomites, displaced from their homeland east of the Dead Sea, gradually came to dominate all of southern Judaea south of Beth-Zur, about 40 kilometers south-southwest of Jerusalem, and soon lent their name to this new district, Idumaea (see, in general, Kashner 1988). West of the ridge line and north of the Negev Judaea sustained a standard type of Mediterranean dry agriculture, concentrating on grain and olives, with grapes at the higher elevations and date palms lower and in the desert (for a survey, see Feliks 1990, an English summary of which appears in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* s.v. "agriculture"). The immediate area of Jerusalem had a relative abundance of natural springs (see Stern 1993, 700). Furthermore, the important cash (p. 181) crop of balsam—used medicinally—was cultivated in the area, fairly widely in the Iron Age, but by the Hellenistic and Roman periods exclusively in small plantations near Jericho, which, due to their great profitability, constituted a royal and then an imperial estate (Patrich 1997).

Between about 100 BCE and 70 CE, or perhaps as late as 135 CE—the best-attested period of Jewish history before the high Middle Ages—the Jews dominated other areas of Palestine, especially Idumaea and Galilee, and perhaps also the very fertile Jezreel Valley, just south of Galilee. They were also significantly present in the Greek cities of the coast and the Decapolis (east of the Sea of Galilee). Samaria, north of Judaea, had once constituted the core of the Kingdom of Israel (see below), but by the Hellenistic and Roman periods its inhabitants consisted of residents of the Greek city of Samaria (renamed "Sebaste" in honor of Augustus), and the community of "Samaritans" centered at Shechem, a group who regarded themselves as "Israelites" and had complex and shifting relations with their southern neighbors that gradually hardened into mutual hostility (Hjelm 2000; Mor 2003; see Map 6.1).

After the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 135 CE Jewish settlement in Judaea proper came temporarily to an end, though it would eventually enjoy a modest revival on the semidesert periphery of Judaea in late antiquity (J. Schwartz 1986; Schäfer 2003, vii-xx).

Jewish States

The remaining areas of concentrated Jewish population were now eastern Galilee and eventually the western Golan Heights, with looser concentrations as always in the coastal and Decapolitan cities, in the Carmel region near modern Haifa on the northern Palestinian coast, and in the eastern Jezreel Valley. The Jewish population of Palestine contracted once again starting in the sixth century at the latest.

History



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 6.1 Palestine under Herod and His Heirs

The biblical books of 1 and 2 Kings provide a partly naturalistic and highly detailed account of the foundation of an Israelite kingdom, replacing an earlier tribal confederation, by Saul, around 1100 BCE; the establishment of a royal dynasty based in the newly conquered city of Jerusalem by his successor David; the construction of a cult center there by his son Solomon; the division of the original state into a northern kingdom, called Israel, based in Samaria; and a southern kingdom, called Judah,

still based in Jerusalem and ruled by a Davidide, after Solomon's death. According to Kings, the larger and wealthier northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BCE, while Judah survived until 586, when the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar deposed King Zedekiah, reduced the inhabitants to subjection, resettled a large portion of them in Mesopotamia, and destroyed the capital city and its great temple of Yahweh. (p. 182)

(p. 183) Though many of the details of this narrative must be treated skeptically, there is probably some truth to the broad outline of the story, especially its later parts (more positivistic: Miller and Hayes 1986; cautiously skeptical: Brettler 1995). Furthermore, archaeology and epigraphy demonstrate the importance in the region of Yahweh, the national god of the Israelites, who later became the only God of the Jews (Tigay 1986). The same evidence also shows that many inhabitants of the kingdoms worshiped other gods and also that they worshiped Yahweh in ways the Jews would later reject (Smith 1971, 15–56; Hadley 2000)—points given repeated emphasis in the “deuteronomic history” (Judges–2 Kings), not to mention the writings of the biblical prophets (van Seters 1983, 249–321).

For much of its later history the kingdom of Judah had been a vassal/ally of Assyria and Babylonia, against the revived regional power of Saite Egypt. Judah retained its subordinate position when all the great kingdoms of the Near East fell to the Persians Cyrus and his son Cambyses between 545 and 525 BCE. But much else changed. First of all, archaeological surveys suggest that the population of Persian Judah was a fraction of that in the last century of the kingdom, a very few tens of thousands at most (Finkelstein 1988–1989, 154–155; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992). Jerusalem, and eventually its temple, was rebuilt on a much smaller scale; the city—in practice now a village—may have had as few as 400 to 500 inhabitants in the fifth century BCE (Finkelstein 2008, 506–507). The political situation in the Persian province of Yehud (as it was now called) is very poorly attested. The biblical books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra, which may be nearly contemporaneous witnesses to the first century of Persian rule, indicate that at first the emperors entrusted the district to a kind of diarchy, composed of a royal figure of Davidic ancestry and a priest allegedly descended from Zadok, the chief priest of Solomon’s temple. (During the kingdom the chief priests of Jerusalem were functionaries of little political importance.) In any case, the Davidides were soon off the scene, never to be heard from again (except much later in the form of messiahs), while the chief priests assumed much greater importance (Grabbe 1992, 1.122–1.130).

Ezra and Nehemiah tell the stories of their eponymous heroes, appointees of Artaxerxes I, entrusted with reorganizing the religious life and finances of Yehud. They are said to have imposed on the inhabitants a law-code called the *sefer torat Moshe* (i.e., the Book of the Law of Moses—probably a version of the Pentateuch or Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), to have induced the leading priests and landowners to expel their foreign wives and to have refortified Jerusalem (Grabbe 1992, 1.130–1.139). The public life of the district came to be dominated by something we can recognize as Judaism (Williamson 2004, 25–46). Once again, the details are debated (Japhet 1998). Attempts to derive precise social and economic histories of Yehud from the paltry sources are certainly ill-advised. But it seems tolerably certain that by the fourth century, Yehud constituted a semiautonomous province, paying tribute to the Achaemenids, ruled by the chief priest of the Jerusalem temple—who generally but not invariably doubled as the Achaemenids’ governor—probably in accordance with some version of the *torat Moshe* (Tuplin 1987; Hoglund 1992). It also remained poor and relatively little populated; since (p. 184) Yehud did not reach west as far as the coast (which was about three days from Jerusalem on foot), and was near but not on the main caravan routes from the east, developments like the use of coined silver (including production of a provincial coinage) and the Hellenization of material culture were slow to arrive, reaching Jerusalem in the course of the fourth century, some fifty years after they reached the Syro-Palestinian coast (Stern 1982).

This regime survived the replacement of Persians by Macedonians in 332 BCE and was brought to an end only as a result of the pressures that attended the restoration of Seleucid rule in southern Syria after 200 BCE. Around 175 BCE, the Zadokide high priest of Jerusalem, Jason, attempted to reorganize Judaea, initiating its transformation from an ethnic district centered on a temple into a Greek city-plus-territory (2 Maccabees 4–5).

The royal intervention and rebellion that followed confirmed the centrality of the Jerusalem temple and *torat Moshe* in the lives of the Judaeans, but it also transformed the district into a functionally, and then actually, independent kingdom ruled by a new dynasty, the Hasmoneans, which also assumed the high priesthood and launched, around 110 BCE, a forty-year period of conquest and consolidation (Schürer 1973–1987, 1.137–1266; Grabbe 1992, 1.221–311; S. Schwartz 2001, 22–42).

At the end of this time the Hasmoneans ruled almost all of Palestine, including part of the east bank of the Jordan, and had begun the process of transforming the inhabitants of these newly conquered districts, who included Idumaeans, Samaritans, Galilaeans, and Greeks, into Jews, so Josephus informs us (*Antiquities* 13.254–258; 319; Cohen 1999, 109–76; Horsley 2002; Pasto 2002). Information about how the Hasmonean kingdom operated is more abundant than that concerning its predecessors but is still sparse. The Hasmoneans probably ruled the district of Judaea in the traditional style, through the administrative authority the high priests had enjoyed since Persian rule. But they ruled the conquered districts as kings—or, as Max Weber might have put it, patrimonially—using the intermediation of local grandees who had relationships of “friendship” or vassalage with the rulers. There is ample evidence that the Hasmoneans’ claims of legitimacy, whether as priests or as kings, were never unchallenged, and so they may have placed unusual weight on personal friendships with the locally powerful—even in Judaea—as a political tool, a policy that soon led to their downfall (S. Schwartz 2000).

By 67 BCE, competition between heirs to the Hasmonean throne over access to the military manpower wielded by their vassals led to a thirty-year war of succession, not interrupted but intensified by Pompey’s conquest of Palestine in 63 BCE (Gabba 1999). This period came to an end in 40 BCE, when the Parthian empire exploited the Roman civil war and conquered Syria-Palestine; installed the last Hasmonean king, Antigonus, on the throne in Jerusalem; and put to flight Herod, the most ambitious and aggressive vassal of Antigonus’ uncle and enemy Hyrcanus. In the 40s Herod, scion of a leading Idumaeans family (Idumaea was the first district conquered and Judaized by the Hasmoneans, around 110 BCE), had taken pains to secure the patronage of Mark Antony, who now reciprocated Herod’s ministrations by having the (p. 185) senate name him king. In practice, this imposed on him the obligation to help Rome reconquer Syria (Schalit 1969; Shaw 1993; Richardson 1996; Kokkinos 1998).

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–ca.100 CE) devoted the first book of the *Jewish War* and books 14 through 17 of the *Jewish Antiquities* to Herod’s reign (40–44 BCE)—by far the longest accounts of the reign of any Roman client king. Whatever the accuracy of the details, Josephus’s accounts are highly revelatory of the challenges facing groups, and their rulers, living on the peripheries of the early Roman Empire.

Like any intermediary, Herod had two chief tasks: to secure his relations with his patrons, first Antony and then Augustus and Marcus Agrippa; and to pacify (and draw a reliable income from) his subjects. The latter task was simplified not only by the fact that Herod could benefit from the hereditary clientele of the Idumaeans but also because he had

spent the period before his coronation acquiring a personal clientele, especially among non-Judaeans, independently of his Hasmonean masters. However, he had little support among the influential staff of the Jerusalem temple, and indeed he was regarded with hostility in Judaea in general—it is this which the hostile historiographical tradition reflects. In general his subjects were deeply disunified: among the Jews, there were Judaeans, Idumaeans, and Galilaeans, who had often opposed interests; Samaritans had a highly complex and ambivalent relationship with the Jews. Pagans were divided between city dwellers, called “Greeks” in the sources (and needless to say cities were often in competition with one another), and country people, called “Syrians,” not to mention nomadic or seminomadic tribesmen at the kingdom’s northeastern edge. He also had to confront the neighboring kingdom of the Nabataeans, close kin and bitter enemies of the Jews in general and of Herod in particular (for the above evaluation see S. Schwartz 2001, 42–48).

Much like Augustus, Herod proceeded on all fronts simultaneously: he provided his Roman friends not only with tribute but also with honors and memorials, founding cities and fortresses in their names (Caesarea, Sebaste, Agrippeion, Antonia, Julias; see Schürer 1973–1987, 1.287–329). Though Josephus may have been right to claim that Herod married some of his ten wives for their beauty (*War* 1.477), others were clearly the artifacts of political alliances—abortively with the surviving Hasmoneans, with non-Hasmonean Jerusalem priestly aristocracy, with leading Samaritans, and so on (*Antiquities* 17–19–22). At Jerusalem he introduced Roman-style euergetism, with mixed success, but also practiced on a vast scale traditionally Jewish concern for the weak, starving, and indigent. He extravagantly funded the imperial cult in his newly founded cities of Caesarea and Sebaste, and the Olympic Games and other symbols of Hellenism, but also massively rebuilt the Jerusalem temple and tirelessly used his connections at Rome to defend the interests of vulnerable Jewish communities in Asia Minor and elsewhere. In fact it is possible to discern a broad tendency, if not a policy, in Herod’s actions. Among the Jews, Herod worked to bring about integration, within his kingdom, both in the Jewish world as a whole and between the Jews and the Roman Empire.

(p. 186) Crucial features of the former were his massive reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple and his reformation of the high priesthood. The temple was now one of the largest structures in the Roman world; and Herod transformed the high priesthood from a hereditary to an appointed office (he lacked the proper ancestry to assume the position himself, and he strongly disfavored in his appointments traditional Jerusalem aristocrats). These, along with construction of a large harbor in the new city of Caesarea Maritima and Herod’s defense of diaspora Jewish communities, were part of a probably conscious effort to transform what had previously been small-scale, specifically local Judaeans institutions into generally Jewish ones, there to serve the interests of a greatly expanded Jewish population both inside (due to the Hasmonean conquests) and outside (due to growth of the diaspora) of Palestine (Schalit 1969; Raban and Holum 1996; Richardson 1996; Roller 1998; S. Schwartz 2001, 42–48; Levine 2002; S. Schwartz 2009).

But the character of the great pilgrimage port city of Caesarea reveals some of the ways in which Herod tried to promote integration into the Roman world. Though the city's population was probably roughly evenly divided between Jews and "Greeks," the city was emphatically Roman in character. A temple of Roma and Augustus stood on a promontory dominating the harbor and was thus the first thing Jewish pilgrims saw as they reached the Palestinian coast. Likewise at Jerusalem itself Herod established quinquennial games perhaps modeled on the Actian games, complete with gladiatorial competitions and wild beast hunts—among the very earliest appearance of such entertainments in the eastern empire—and built an amphitheater to house them (*Antiquities* 15.267–79). Though Herod was strongly Jewish-identified (despite his non-Judaeen ancestry) he also lavished benefactions on the non-Jewish regions of his kingdom, but the standard practices of Roman euergetism were far less fraught there.

Herod's behavior can reasonably be seen as a series of experiments, an attempt to find precisely the right balance between Jewish distinctiveness and exclusivity and Rome's relative interventionism. It is often forgotten that his efforts were partly successful: the Jews emerged from Herod's reign far more integrated internally than they had been beforehand. The Jerusalem temple and pilgrimage to it became fantastically popular all over the Jewish world, which included substantial settlements outside the Roman Empire in Mesopotamia and Iran. Scattered Jewish communities probably never shared more, or were in closer contact with each other and with their religious center, until modern times. Sectarianism—self-conscious pietistic self-differentiation among Jewish elites and subelites—which was characteristic of the Jews especially in Judaea in the first century, was a paradoxical effect of this integration, since it reflected the intense dedication of these classes to the ideological core of Judaism (Baumgarten 1997). Another, less paradoxical effect was probably rising tension between Jews and their Greek and Syrian neighbors inside Palestine.

But the competition between internal and external integration proved to be a zero-sum game: the more integrated the Jews were internally—the more imbued they were with a distinctively and self-consciously countercultural ideological system—the less inclined they were to buy into the Roman system. Jerusalem proved (p. 187) enduringly resistant to Roman-style euergetism; Herod's temple flourished, but his "isactian" games and amphitheater disappeared without a trace. His high priests probably enjoyed little local institutional legitimacy (though pilgrims were scarcely in a position to object to or resent them) but they swiftly established themselves as great landowners and patrons (Goodman 1987). And there is no question that non-Judaeen Jews—Idumaeans and Galilaeans—who had previously demonstrated little affection for Jerusalem and its temple now became much more thoroughly devoted, though it is noteworthy that some (Galilaeans?) found Jesus of Nazareth's ambivalence attractive.

Augustus, at any rate, did not maintain the integrity of Herod's kingdom after his death. It was briefly divided into three small principalities ruled by Herod's sons by "minor" wives—since he had executed his sons by his most aristocratic, Hasmonean wife, Mariamme (he allowed his Hasmonean grandchildren to survive; Schürer 1973–1987,

1.330–57). One of these grandsons, Agrippa I, befriended both Gaius and Claudius and in the latter's reign briefly (until his death) was granted Herod's kingdom (41–44 CE; Schürer 1973–1987, 1.442–54; D. Schwartz 1990); but otherwise, central Palestine from the Jezreel Valley in the north to the Negev in the south was mainly ruled by a personal agent of the emperor, in occasional collaboration with the governor of Syria (Schürer 1973–1987, 1.357–98; 455–470). To complicate matters, the high priest and temple staff, and the senior descendant of Herod—who served as overseer of the temple's finances—exercised some authority over the Jews wherever in Palestine they lived. So the political situation in Palestine between Herod's death and the outbreak of rebellion seventy years later was exceptionally complex (Gabba 1999). And meanwhile the temple and the pilgrimage festivals remained immensely popular, which translated into a flow of silver into Jerusalem, into the pockets of the leading priests and Herodians as well as those of the Jerusalemites and Judaeans in general. This economic development had some noteworthy aspects: though it challenged the interests of the Roman state they at first did nothing to hinder the flow; it also generated a highly inflationary and unbalanced economy in Palestine. Judaea was tremendously enriched, land prices rose, and traditional Mediterranean agriculture was rendered economically unfeasible, all of which served to enhance dedication to the temple and reliance on its peculiar economy and, however indirectly, alienation from Rome, precisely among those upper classes on whom Rome tended to rely (Goodman 1987, 51–75; 2002; 2007, 397–422; S. Schwartz 2001, 87–99).

The rebellion that followed (66–70 CE) led to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and the normalization of Palestine's provincial status. It also brought about the death and captivity of many Jews (S. Schwartz 2006). The Jews were not to enjoy any meaningful corporate autonomy until the Christianization of the Empire in the fourth century, and it then assumed a radically different form than it had previously. The Christian emperors recognized the Jews as members not so much of a nation as of a legitimate, if inferior, ecclesiastical establishment, complete with privileged clergy and a quasi-episcopal dynast called a “patriarch,” who, under the Theodosian emperors briefly, became a very powerful figure.

(p. 188) Origins and Phenomenology

Central Palestine is neither so remote nor so poor in resources and ability to sustain population—nor for that matter so rich and centrally situated—that it could avoid or resist for long domination by others. Its politics and culture have always been shaped by the dynamic interaction of imperial (latterly, global geopolitical) interests and emergent and shifting local solidarities and identities. Its political arrangements are thus quite unlike those that appear to emerge organically from the ecologies of river basins, sheltered natural harbors, oases, and the like. They have always been in emphatic ways products of clashing exertions of human will. None of this is to suggest that the most peculiar

features of Judaism—its monotheism; its sharp restriction of cultic activity and remarkable extension of cultic restrictions and rituals; and its enshrining of its national myths, religious rules, and general cultural heritage in a single text, the Torah and related biblical books—features that made it unique, or at least very odd, in its time, and the fountainhead of the monotheistic world religions, can be readily explained through the schematizing simplifications of structural-functionalist analysis (see in general S. Schwartz 2001).

Indeed, in some ways the experience of the Jews in Palestine was in unusually high tension with “objective” constraints (cf. Bourdieu 1977, 78). Historically there have been few or no large cities in the Palestinian interior as opposed to the coast and the desert fringe, where cities developed at least in part in response to trade. In the interior settlement was generally nucleated in towns and villages, but these tended to be small. Jerusalem enjoyed the slight advantage afforded by a water supply that was relatively abundant for the region, but otherwise it was endowed with no unusual resources. It was selected in the Iron Age as the main Israelite royal and cult center for unknown reasons but possibly precisely because it lacked the associations and partisan loyalties of traditional religious centers like Mamre, near Hebron, or Beth El and Shiloh in Samaria. For much of its history it was an insignificant and extremely poor town, but at two points in antiquity it became a city of great local and even regional importance. These periods were in the first century CE and the fifth and sixth centuries CE—both cases illustrating the ascendancy of ideology over material constraints.

Notwithstanding Jerusalem’s importance, Judaea, and then the broader Palestinian Jewish kingdom assembled by the Hasmoneans and Herod, never had the aspect of a city-state. There was no municipal citizenship of Jerusalem (Tcherikover 1964); the city’s sole function was to serve as metropolis of the Jewish ethnos, and home of what by the fifth century BCE was probably the Jews’ only temple, in Palestine, at least. In the most detailed contemporary historical account of the Jews, that of Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE), the ethnos of the Jews was imagined as a stable body that persisted under a variety of political regimes, always centered on its temple and its peculiar laws, even in periods when the priests wielded little political power. Josephus wrote after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and (p. 189) the reduction of Palestine to provincial status in 70 CE, and yet still assumed—or at any rate argued for—the endurance of the ethnos of the Jews in the absence of even the most tenuous vestiges of political autonomy.

Ethnos and State

It has recently been argued, and in the past very frequently simply assumed, that the Jews were precocious nationalists, in the sense that they spent most of antiquity aspiring to achieve meaningful political self-determination—the “self” in question being members of an ethnic/religious corporation residing in high concentrations in portions of Palestine that they dominated demographically as well as some of their “diasporic” offshoots—that is, self-identified Jews living outside Palestine, whatever their ultimate ethnic or geographic origins (Mendels 1992; Goodblatt 2006). However, these aspirations were very infrequently attained. Indeed, the characteristic political condition of the Jews in pre-Roman (and early Roman) antiquity was not that of a state but of a partly autonomous province subject to an empire. Even the rebellions that brought the remnants of this arrangement to an end may be seen less as anticipations of nineteenth-century nationalism than as extreme responses to an imperial regime many Jews experienced as unprecedentedly interventionist and oppressive.

Political Ideology and Praxis

The political ideals of the Jews were enshrined in their holy books, the Torah and related documents. In fact the Torah promoted a fairly coherent vision of an ideal society in which all (male) Israelites were bound together by shared dependency on their one god, Yahweh (imagined, like relationships of social dependency in the Iron Age Near East in general, as based on a contract, or “covenant”). All were thus in some sense equal and expected to claim and enact unconditional love, or loyalty, to one another, regardless of relationship (Leviticus 19.18). In fact, the Torah imagines all Israel as a metaphorical clan (*‘am*, in Hebrew—often translated as “nation”). Concurrently, the Torah contained laws manifestly meant to prevent the accumulation of landholding and the development of ties of social dependency between Israelite individuals or groups; all redistribution of resources was placed in the hands of the nation as a whole, and since it was obligatory it was not meant to generate gratitude or reciprocation (Leviticus 19.9–10, 25; Deuteronomy 15). In the absence of large estates and social dependency, there was no place in the Torah’s political ideology for an aristocracy. Instead there was a hereditary priesthood—a class (p. 190) of enablers and intermediaries expressly barred from aristocratic status because they were forbidden to own land and were made dependent on the gifts of the Israelites (Numbers 18.8–32; Deuteronomy 18.1–8). The Torah, like other biblical books, clearly disapproves of kingship—the only true king is Yahweh, just as he is Israel’s only true patron, lord, and friend—but it is prepared to concede the grudging legitimacy of a highly attenuated version of the institution (Deuteronomy 17.14–20). It views dependency—political or social—on local foreigners as a curse (Deuteronomy

28.43–44) but does not condemn corporate vassalage to a distant ruler, provided it is not too oppressive.

In sum, the Torah's political and social vision bears a family resemblance to Athenian democracy. Affective ties unrelated to dependency-producing exchange are meant to bind the entire citizen body—solidarity prevails over reciprocity—which controls as a corporation all authority to redistribute resources. Egalitarianism is in both cases complemented by particularism. Tight, affective ties bind only citizens and absolutely exclude those outside: interethnic elite friendships, for example, are strongly disapproved (see, in general, Herman 1987; S. Schwartz 2007).

The Torah probably grew by accretion over several centuries and is not anchored in any one political regime. It is neither an analytic schematization (with or without a programmatic thrust) of a political "constitution," in the manner of an Aristotelian or Xenophontic politeia, nor a Platonic utopian fantasy. Rather it is aspirational/prescriptive: the Jews were supposed to live by its rules and enact its social and political vision, which is nevertheless manifestly idealized and countercultural, although the Torah never explains how its vision is to be realized. The history of the crystallization of the Jewish nation around the armature of the Torah is thus a history of accommodation and adaptation. For example, the Torah wanted the Jews to separate from their neighbors but proposed nothing except for divine favor to compensate for the economic role foreign friendships played (cf. Ezra 9.12; by contrast, the Athenians had first their maritime "empire" and later their commercial predominance to finance their particularistic democracy).

The result was that the Jews' actual political behavior, in contrast to their ideal constitution, often had a surprisingly noncountercultural character, at least in the later Hellenistic and early Roman imperial periods when we actually know something about it. The Jewish *nation* may have had the Torah as its constitution, but in Jewish *states*—if it is even correct to speak of such entities (see below)—the status of the document was much more tenuous and complex. Thus, as early as the Achaemenid period, the Jews' high priests had often played the purely secular role of tax collectors and intermediaries between ethnos and empire (S. Schwartz 1994; Schaper 2000, 137–161; 269–279). The hereditary priesthood was indubitably important in Judaea but its importance was enhanced by the fact that notwithstanding the Torah's strictures the priests were always among the leading landowners in the province (Schürer 1973–1997, 2.238–56; Sanders 1992, 317–340). This was furthermore enabled by the fact that the Torah's prohibition of accumulation of (p. 191) landholding, by means of periodic redistribution, was never enacted. The priesthood was thus no mere clergy but at least at some periods approximated aristocratic status as well; it monopolized access not only to the sacred but also to material resources. Accordingly, the Torah could never eradicate institutionalized social dependency: gift exchange functioned among the Jews much as it did among their neighbors. Patronage (even in the absence of a special term for it), vassalage, debt bondage, and formal friendship, both domestic and foreign, all persisted among the Jews and, as we have seen, played fundamental roles in the integration of the Hasmonean and

Jewish States

Herodian states. But egalitarian solidarity persisted too, always as an ideal realized through acts of essentially symbolic character (like those associated with biblical poor-relief laws, or in the liturgy of the synagogue), and in practice probably on certain occasions of heightened religious emotion, like pilgrimage festivals (Sanders 1992, 119–145; 213–240), but perhaps most importantly in the small sectarian religious and revolutionary organizations that were so fateful a part of Palestinian Jewish life in the first century (Baumgarten 1997). In this way it was preserved by the two most important groups of heirs of these organizations—the early Christians and the ancient rabbis.

Armies: Citizen or Professional?

Some of the small organizations that featured concentrated solidarity were primarily military in character. Indeed, one might have expected the proto-republican political ideals of the Jewish ethnos to have generated a tendency toward something like an ideology of the citizen militia characteristic of some classical and Hellenistic Greek states. Such an ideology did in fact exist among the Jews. The pro-Hasmonean forces in the Maccabean Revolt may conceivably have thought of themselves as constituting the “nation” of the Jews (Bickermann 1937, 27–32). Three centuries later followers of the Judaeen rebel Simon ben Kosiba (Bar Kokhba, r. 132–135 CE) addressed each other in the emotion-drenched language of family solidarity (Schürer 1973–1987, 1.546). Presumably the Jewish rebels against Rome in 66 CE had similar self-perceptions.

Yet the ideology of the citizen army seems not to have persisted in more stable periods. In Achaemenid and Hellenistic Judaea there existed no known Jerusalemite or Judaeen militia. To the extent that there were troops in the district, they were imperial garrison troops. Epigraphical evidence from Achaemenid fortresses just south of Judaea demonstrates that such units were ethnically mixed, contained troops of local origin but not exclusively so, and were commanded by Persians, or at any rate men with Persian names (Aharoni 1973, 79–82, 1981, 166–204; Naveh 1979). We learn from the Zenon papyri that a century or two later the Ptolemies strove to assert control of local forces in Palestine who were, however, (p. 192) organized along patrimonial rather than ethnic or national lines—they consisted of a rural grandee plus an armed entourage. Some of these units, though, later turned up—no longer under the control of their rural big-man—fighting for the Hasmoneans (S. Schwartz 1993).

Strikingly, once the Hasmonean state—that unstable, short-lived kingdom with the strongest claim of any political entity before modern times to be a Jewish state—acquired a measure of stability, in the reign of John Hyrcanus I (134–104 BCE), it abandoned whatever ideology of citizen army it may have once had, at least in part, and began to employ mercenaries on a large scale. Very little is known about the Hasmonean armies beyond this fact. It is likely that the Hasmoneans conducted their conquests much the way republican Rome did, by combining violence with judicious grants of privileges to their more compliant victims. Among the privileges were Jewish status, and probably the right to be conscripted. The Hasmoneans may have striven to absorb the most important Idumaeen, Samaritan, and Galilaean patronage networks through the creation of personal alliances, or friendships, with their nodal personalities, and mobilized them for further conquest and plunder. The Hasmonean armies thus endured several major transformations—from the personal entourage of the founders of the family, to the revolutionary army of the following period, which considered itself representative of all “Israel,” to an army of standard Hellenistic type, which combined patrimonialism and

professionalism. This last model was in fact continued, with some updating, by the patrimonial grandee who displaced the Hasmoneans, Herod (Shatzman 1991).

Romans regarded Herod as the Jewish king and his kingdom as a Jewish kingdom, but it has been suggested above that this characterization was, if not completely wrong, not the entire truth either. Like all armies, Herod's sometimes exhibited considerable solidarity, but the character of that solidarity could be complicatedly related to the troops' Jewishness. When Herod arrived in Palestine after his coronation in Rome in 40 BCE, he began assembling troops from among his ancestral friends and allies, among others, primarily Galilaean and Idumaeans (who had probably formed an important part of the later Hasmonean armies; Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.394–98). When these conquered Jerusalem in 37 BCE they committed a great massacre—not a selective execution of the partisans of Herod's opponent the Hasmonean Antigonus—which Herod succeeded in containing only with great difficulty (*Antiquities* 14.477–86). The most reasonable explanation posits the non-Judaeans' lingering resentments of Judaeans, and so the persistence of some Galilaean and Idumaeans' self-consciousness long after the Judaization of their ancestors. But Herod also employed a unit called Sebastenes (after their place of origin, Samaria-Sebaste), renowned for their hostility to Jews (Josephus, *War* 2.51–79), and a troop of mounted archers of Babylonian Jewish origin settled in Batanea, on the largely pagan northeastern periphery of Herod's kingdom, a group famous for its Jewish piety (*Antiquities* 17.23–31). Herod thus tried consistently to exploit the many competing solidarities of his subjects for political advantage.

(p. 193)

Resistance and Repression

The gradual consolidation of Judaism as the normative ideology of the Jews in the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods was, as has been suggested above, never complete. Real-life Jewish politics was always quite different from what the Torah had envisioned, but the demands of the Torah exerted a constant pressure on Jewish rulers who were also pulled in the opposite direction by the coercive, or attractive, force of their eastern Mediterranean environment. Every Jewish ruler was almost by definition vulnerable to charges of not living up to the demands of the Jews' utopian constitution; legitimacy was always a struggle and rather high levels of resistance a given. Every Hasmonean had to cope with uprisings. We know little about these except that in a few cases the risings were led by Judaeans whose Jewish rigorism led them to oppose rulers who had not only usurped the high priesthood and the kingship (on the theory that only Davidides were allowed to be kings) but also persistently violated Jewish law by leaving the temple compound, going to war (high priests were not permitted either to leave the temple or to have contact with corpses), and declaring Jewish large numbers of local pagans (*Antiquities* 13.372–83). Other religiously rigoristic resisters secluded themselves in what amounted to urban monasteries or fled to the Judean Desert. One such group is responsible for writing and collecting the Dead Sea scrolls. This group recalled episodes

of persecution by early Hasmonean rulers, and in its texts frequently expressed its hostility to the family, as to Herod, later on. Yet the persecution was fleeting, and such groups seem to have been largely left alone by the kings for the following reasons: they were too small to bother with, had enough nonsectarian support to convince the kings to leave them alone, their tacit disavowal of armed resistance was sufficient, or they engaged in imposture when in public settings, proclaiming their loyalty to the Hasmoneans. There is some evidence for all of these reasons (see Baumgarten 1997).

While sectarian groups persisted in their hostility to the state under Herod, and continued to do so largely undisturbed, armed resistance was limited to the beginning and end of his reign. Herod had seized control of the Hasmoneans' kingdom by force; attempted to co-opt the Hasmoneans by marriage, but to very limited effect (given that the marriage ended with the execution of the queen, soon after those of her mother and grandfather, and the "accidental" drowning of her brother, and that Herod had her sons executed about twenty-five years later; Herod's disastrous relations with his Hasmonean relatives is a major theme of Josephus's account); imposed a new royal dynasty and a new system of high priesthood on the Jews; patronized Greek cities; and built temples dedicated to the imperial cult and to traditional Greek gods. Yet there was almost no open resistance to him during his reign, and even at the very end of his life and immediately after his death, when disturbances erupted, they tended to reflect the restiveness of his veterans, and general dissatisfaction with his heirs, more than Torah-based rejection of Herod's (p. 194) legitimacy (*Antiquities* 17.254–98). Josephus knew of only one exception—a very small group of young Jewish pietists who chopped down the gold eagle Herod had erected over the gate of the Jerusalem temple because it violated the Jewish prohibition of figurative representation—that was quickly dealt with, with no known consequences (*Antiquities* 17.151–63).

Why? The standard answer to this question is to claim that Herod was a violently oppressive tyrant whose subjects lived in a constant state of fear, but this overestimates the ability of ancient states to impose uniformity of behavior on their subjects and exaggerates ancient historiographical traditions that themselves are already manifestly the products of anti-Herodian bias. Herod was indubitably cruel, especially to relatives and friends, and he is plausibly supposed to have become more so as he aged. He was also capable of crushing opposition ruthlessly. But he shared ruthlessness and cruelty with his Hasmonean predecessors. Indeed, Alexander Jannaeus (ruled 103–76 BCE) slaughtered many more of his coreligionists than Herod ever did (*Antiquities* 13.372–83). What distinguished Herod from the Hasmoneans was his skill in balancing a complicated set of competing interests. Herod was more successful than his predecessors had been in co-opting Idumaeans and Galilaean subordinates, to whom he had ancestral ties. He appealed to Judaeans through embrace of native traditions of piety—though his massive reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple was double-edged (at least), since its impact was to remove it from the Judaeans' exclusive control—and to his Greek subjects through his assumption of the roles of *ktistes* (founder) and *euergetes* (benefactor) of Palestinian and other cities. He also forcefully mediated the values and practices of his Roman friends to all his subjects. And while he oversaw the integration of a Jewish world, dependent upon

himself, he also promoted and exploited the communal particularisms of all his variegated subject populations. In sum, he was, like Augustus, a consummately skilled premodern politician who combined violence, threat of violence, immense generosity, willingness to co-opt through constant pressure, agitation, and political and social compromise. But the result was far from an integrated state since its highly particular communities were bound together only by shared (in some cases manifestly grudging) loyalty to the king. Unlike the Hasmoneans, who had used Judaism as a means of helping to integrate their variegated kingdom, Herod's state had no further ideological foundation—though he promoted Judaism among the descendants of the Hasmonean-era converts, of whom he was one, and among the Jews of the diaspora.

Hasmoneans and Herod: An Evaluation

The Hasmonean state was weak and highly unstable: Tacitus had already observed that it existed only to fill the vacuum between Seleucid and Roman domination of Syria.

Furthermore, very little indeed is known about how it worked, as opposed to (p. 195) its wars, conquests (though significant gaps exist even here), and problems of succession. There is next to no information about taxation and legal systems, bureaucracies, or what life in the royal court was like except for some stray details. We can say that notwithstanding their efforts to approximate the norms of Hellenistic kingship (Rajak 2002, 61–80), there were important ways in which they diverged from the model. There is no evidence that any Hasmonean ever founded a city or a town, or renamed an existing one after him/herself, or that they engaged in monumental construction, except perhaps for a winter palace at Jericho, some fortresses, and the family tomb in out-of-the-way Modi'in (1 Maccabees 13.25–30). After the assembly of a great public convocation at Jerusalem in 140 BCE by Simon the Hasmonean (1 Maccabees 14.25–49), at the very beginning of the history of the dynasty, there is no evidence for their manipulation of public spectacle: even the public festival rituals of the Jerusalem temple were not witnessed by large numbers of pilgrims before Herod's expansion of the temple compound. To be sure, many of these typically Hellenistic practices cost money and required stability—both in short supply in a kingdom in a near-constant state of war. It is possible that the Hasmoneans had other ways of bringing about the same results. We should in particular like to know how they succeeded in forcing large populations to convert to Judaism, without encountering any large-scale resistance. They must have had some effective forms of leverage—both material and symbolic—but we can only speculate about it.

Herod embraced monumentalism and symbolic displays of wealth and might, and he did so in ways consciously borrowed from his Roman overlords and his eastern Greek environment, as we have seen. But he also transformed performance of Jewish norms into opportunities for monumental display. Josephus noted that Herod expected his subjects to honor him and pay court to him in gratitude for his generosity, but that he was frequently

disappointed, especially by his Jewish subjects (*Antiquities* 16.150–59). Herod's policies toward the Jews were in reality largely successful, but in a way that ultimately led to the unraveling of whatever was left of his polity in the decades after his death. There was another factor complicit in the end of Jewish autonomy over which neither Herod nor his descendants nor any other Jew in the event had any control. The Jews fell victim to the interventionism of the high imperial Roman state, with its tendency to impose a kind of administrative and political regularity on all the territory it controlled. The long-term effects of Herod's policies may have guaranteed that the Jews' integration into the Roman state would be as blood-soaked and painful as possible, but the Herodian regime with all its complications and compromises is unlikely to have survived long in any case.

References

- Aharoni, Y. 1973. *Beer Sheba I: excavations at Tel Beer-Sheba, 1969–71 Seasons*. Tel Aviv.
- . 1981. *Arad inscriptions*. Jerusalem.
- Baly, D. 1984. "The geography of Palestine and the Levant in relation to its history." In W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, eds., *Cambridge history of Judaism*. Vol. 1, 1–24. Cambridge. (p. 196)
- Baumgarten, A. 1997. *The flourishing of Jewish sects in the Maccabean era: An interpretation*. Leiden.
- Bickermann, E. 1937. *Der Gott der Makkabäer: Untersuchungen über Sinn und Ursprung der makkabäischen Erhebung*. Berlin.
- Brettler, M. 1995. *The creation of history in ancient Israel*. London.
- Broshi, M. and Finkelstein, I. 1992. "The population of Palestine in Iron Age II." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 287: 47–60.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge.
- Cohen, S. 1999. *The beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, varieties, uncertainties*. Berkeley, CA.
- Feliks, Y. 1990. *Agriculture in Eretz Israel in the period of the Bible and Talmud*. Jerusalem.
- Finkelstein, I. 1988–1989. "The land of Ephraim survey, 1980–1987: Preliminary report." *Tel Aviv* 15–16: 117–183.
- . 2008. "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) period and the wall of Nehemiah." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32: 501–520.

- Gabba, E. 1999. "The social, economic and political history of Palestine 63 **BCE-CE** 70." In D. Horbury, W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, eds. *The Cambridge history of Judaism*. Vol. 3, 94–167. Cambridge.
- Goodblatt, D. 2006. *Elements of ancient Jewish nationalism*. Cambridge.
- Goodman, M. 1987. *The ruling class of Judaea: The origins of the Jewish revolt against Rome, AD 66–70*. Cambridge.
- . 2002. "Current scholarship on the First Revolt." In A. Berlin and J. Overman, eds., *The first Jewish revolt: Archaeology, history and ideology*, 15–25. London.
- . 2007. *Rome and Jerusalem: The clash of ancient civilizations*. London.
- Grabbe, L. 1992. *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. 2 vols. Minneapolis.
- Hadley, J. M. 2000. *The cult of Asherah in ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew goddess*. Cambridge.
- Herman, G. 1987. *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city*. Cambridge.
- Hjelm, I. 2000. *The Samaritans and early Judaism: A literary analysis*. Sheffield.
- Hoglund, K. 1992. *Achaemenid imperial administration in Syria-Palestine and the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*. Atlanta.
- Horsley, R. 2002. "The expansion of Hasmonean rule in Idumaea and Galilee: Toward a historical sociology." In P. Davies and J. Halligan, eds. *Second Temple Studies III*, 134–165. Sheffield.
- Japhet, S. 1998. "In search of ancient Israel: Revisionism at all costs." In D. Myers and D. Ruderman, eds., *The Jewish past revisited: Reflections on modern Jewish historians*. 212–233. New Haven, CT.
- Kasher, A. 1988. *Jews, Idumaeans, and ancient Arabs*. Tübingen.
- Kokkinos, N. 1998. *The Herodian dynasty: Origins, role in society and eclipse*. Sheffield.
- Levine, L. 2002. *Jerusalem: Portrait of the city in the Second Temple period (538**BCE**–70**CE**)*. Philadelphia.
- Mendels, D. 1992. *The rise and fall of Jewish nationalism*. New York.
- Miller, J. M., and J. H. Hayes. 1986. *A history of ancient Israel and Judah*. Philadelphia.
- Mor, M. 2003. *From Samaria to Shechem: The Samaritan community in antiquity*. Jerusalem.

- Naveh, J. 1979. "The Aramaic ostraca from Tel Beer-Sheba (1971-6)." *Tel Aviv* 6: 182-195.
(p. 197)
- Pasto, J. 2002. "The origins, expansion and impact of the Hasmoneans in light of comparative ethnographic studies." In P. Davies and J. Halligan, eds. *Second Temple Studies III*, 166-201. Sheffield.
- Patrich, J. 1997. "Shipurim Be-gidulei Ha-afarsemon Ve-hafaqato." In Y. Friedman, Z. Safrai, and J. Schwartz, eds., *Hikrei Eretz: studies in the history of the land of Israel dedicated to Professor Yehuda Feliks*. 139-148. Ramat-Gan.
- Raban, A., and K. Holum, eds. 1996. *Caesarea Maritima: A retrospective after two millennia*. Leiden.
- Rajak, T. 2002. *The Jewish dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in cultural and social interaction*. Leiden.
- Richardson, P. 1996. *Herod: King of the Jews and friend of the Romans*. Columbia, SC.
- Roller, D. 1998. *The building program of Herod the Great*. Berkeley, CA.
- Sanders, E. 1992. *Judaism: Practice and belief, 63BCE-66CE*. Philadelphia.
- Schäfer, P., ed. 2003. *The Bar Kokhba war reconsidered*. Tübingen.
- Schalit, A. 1969. *König Herodes: der Mann und sein Werk*. Berlin.
- Schaper, J. 2000. *Priester und Leviten im Achämenidischen Juda*. Tübingen.
- Schürer, E. 1973-87. *A history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ*. 3 vols. Rev. and ed. G. Vermes et al. Edinburgh.
- Schwartz, D. 1990. *Agrippa I: The last king of Judaea*. Tübingen.
- Schwartz, J. 1986. *Jewish settlement in Judaea*. Jerusalem.
- Schwartz, S. 1993. "A note on the social type and political ideology of the Hasmonean family." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112: 305-309.
- . 1994. "On the autonomy of Judaea in the fourth and third centuries BCE." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45: 157-168.
- . 2000. "Herod, friend of the Jews." In J. Schwartz, Z. Amar, and I. Ziffer, eds., *Jerusalem and Eretz Israel: Arie Kindler Volume*, 67-76. Tel Aviv.
- . 2001. *Imperialism and Jewish society, 200BCE to 640CE*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2006. "Political, social, and economic life in the land of Israel, 66-235 CE." In S. Katz, ed., *Cambridge history of Judaism*, vol. 4, 23-52. Cambridge.

———. 2007. "Conversion to Judaism in the Second Temple period: A functionalist approach." In S. Cohen and J. Schwartz, eds., *Studies in Josephus and the varieties of ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume*, 223–236. Leiden.

———. 2009. "Euergetism in Josephus and the epigraphical culture of first century Jerusalem." In H. Cotton et al., eds., *From Hellenism to Islam: cultural and linguistic change in the Roman Near East*, 75–92. Cambridge.

Shatzman, I. 1991. *The armies of the Hasmoneans and Herod: From Hellenistic to Roman frameworks*. Tübingen.

Shaw, B. 1993. "Tyrants, bandits and kings: Personal power in Josephus." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44: 176–204.

Skolnik, F., and M. Berenbaum. 2007. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Detroit.

Smith, M. 1971. *Palestinian parties and politics that shaped the Old Testament*. New York.

Stern, E. 1982. *Material culture of the land of the Bible in the Persian period*. Warminster.

———, ed. 1993. *New encyclopaedia of archaeological excavations in the Holy Land*. Jerusalem.

Tcherikover, V. 1964. "Was Jerusalem a polis?" *Israel Exploration Journal* 14: 61–78.

Tigay, J. 1986. *You shall have no other gods: Israelite religion in the light of Hebrew inscriptions*. Atlanta. (p. 198)

Tuplin, C. 1987. "The administration of the Achaemenid empire." In I. Carradice, ed., *Coinage and administration in the Athenian and Persian empires*, 109–166. Oxford.

van Seters, J. 1983. *In search of history: Historiography in the ancient world and the origins of biblical history*. New Haven, CT.

Williamson, H. G. M. 2004. *Studies in Persian period history and historiography*. Tübingen.

Seth Schwartz

Seth Schwartz is Professor in the History and Classics Departments at Columbia University. He writes on the social, cultural, and political history of the Jews in antiquity.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Iranian Empires

Josef Wiesehöfer

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Middle Eastern Languages and Culture, Greek and Roman Law,
Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0008

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores the history of the formation of the Iranian Empires, identifying the major phases in state formation, which include the Achaemenid Empire, Iran in Hellenistic times, the Parthian Empire, and the Sasanian Empire. It also describes the key features of the Achaemenid Empire, the Arsacid-Parthian Empire, and the Sasanian Empire, and explains the factors and conditions that influenced state formation.

Keywords: Iranian Empires, state formation, Achaemenid Empire, Parthian Empire, Sasanian Empire, Arsacid-Parthian Empire, Iran, Hellenistic times

Major Phases in State Formation

The Achaemenid Empire

The center of the Achaemenid empire (Wiesehöfer 2004; 2009; Huyse 2005; Brosius 2006; Briant 2002; Kuhrt 2007; cf. www.achemenet.com) was a region in southwestern Iran that had seen processes of acculturation between Elamites and Iranians and the ethnogenesis of groups of people who called themselves “Persians” and later gave their name both to this country and its main royal residence (Old Persian *Parsa*, Greek *Persis*, *Persepolis*). It was from here that the Teispid Cyrus I, who called himself and his forebears “King(s) of Anshan’,” fundamentally changed the political landscape of the ancient Near East. After winning the territories of the Elamite kingdom, Cyrus defeated Astyages, the leader of the Median confederacy (around 550 BCE), the last rulers of the Urartian state, and the Lydian king Croesus (around 545 BCE) who had all tried to stop the Persians’ advancement. It was with the fall of the Lydian empire that the Greek cities on the western Anatolian coast also changed their master. In October 539, Cyrus was able to enter the city of Babylon, which had opened its gates to the opponent of its last ruler Nabonidus, and to incorporate the former Neo-Babylonian territories into the Persian empire. This success was confirmed by Cyrus’s conquest of eastern Iran, probably in the 530s, about which we have no further details.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map. 7.1 The Achaemenid Empire

From Cyrus’s time, the Persians had a common border with Egypt, the only other remaining superpower. The king’s son Cambyses responded to the attempt by the Egyptian king Amasis to meet the Persian threat with an impressive fleet through the time- and money-consuming

construction of a Persian navy. After (p. 200) (p. 201) the conquest of Cyprus and the crossing of the Sinai, Cambyses won a victory at Pelusium (525), took Memphis, and captured King Psammetichus III. His success was made complete by the voluntary submission of Libyan territories, the securing of Egypt’s southern frontier through deft diplomacy, and probably also by winning control of the big western oases (Map 7.1).

A serious crisis, however, afflicted the empire during Cambyses’ stay in Egypt, as a result of the high economic and military demands he made on his subjects, and probably also as a result of tensions between the king and both the mighty Persian aristocracy and his brother Bardiya. Rebellion broke out in Iran that finally led to the usurpation of the throne by the Achaemenid Darius I. In his account on the rock of Bisutun he tries to glorify his brutal oppression of empire-wide revolts.

Iranian Empires

Darius's reign (until 486 BCE) was probably the most important phase in the history of the Achaemenid empire. It was the time of its greatest extent, of decisive fiscal and administrative reforms, and of the development of a specific Persian ideology of kingship and rule. In the west, Darius incorporated the Cyrenaica, Thrace, the strategically important straits of the Bosphorus, and Samos into the empire, and made Macedon and Athens acknowledge the Great King's supreme power in foreign affairs. In the east, he conquered "Indian" territories, and in the north he probably regarded the Danube as his frontier after an unsuccessful campaign against the "European" Scythians beyond the Danube. His later policy of consolidation suffered a bitter setback when in 498 the Ionian cities revolted against their Persian overlord. Only a supreme effort, and disunity amongst the Ionians, enabled Darius to suppress the revolt. Over the next few years, steps were taken to safeguard the loyalty of the Ionians for the future, and Darius prepared to punish Eretria and Athens for their role in the revolt (and, in the case of Athens, also for the city's violation of the treaty of 507/6). The Persian defeat at Marathon (490), however, marked the ignominious end to an otherwise successful expedition in the Aegean. Darius was also drawn into the affairs of Egypt, where the short reign of Cambyses had been insufficient to establish political stability. The most notable of his many measures were the withdrawal of the fiscal orders of his predecessor, the confirmation of former privileges of sanctuaries and priesthoods, the completion of Necho's canal between the eastern Nile Delta and the Red Sea, and the dispatch of naval expeditions to and from Egypt that served to demonstrate the special qualities of Persian rule by emulating past pharaonic feats. Darius also started the building of the two most impressive Achaemenid residences—first Susa, then Persepolis.

It was a difficult task for the successor, Xerxes (486–465 BCE), to protect and preserve Persian rule. Recent scholarship has rightly emphasized that Xerxes' reign was much more successful than classical Greek authors wanted us to believe, and it did not trigger an irreversible process of decadence and decline in Persian power. Quick to learn his father's lessons, Xerxes was highly successful in consolidating the empire through a carrot-and-stick policy, granting local autonomy on the one hand and exercising strict supervision on the other. Culturally, one might even call Xerxes' rule the high point of Persian civilization. The king failed, however, to (p. 202) force mainland Greeks to accept his hegemonic aspirations to decide for them in foreign affairs (480–479 BCE). The Persian empire was confined to its territories in Asia Minor (now without the coastal region), the Levant, and Egypt.

Achaemenid rule in the Near East was strengthened by the son and probable murderer of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I (465–424/3 BCE). Not only was he able to suppress the Egyptian revolt of Inarus, a Libyan rebel who had been supported by the Delian League under the leadership of Athens, and to beat back the same city's attacks on Cyprus, he also secured the Levantine coast and Palestine for the Persians. An agreement with Athens (449) established the status quo at the empire's northwestern border and enlarged the king's scope for action. When Artaxerxes died in the winter of 424/3 BCE and his son Xerxes II was murdered a few months later, another son, Ochus, was able to overcome the murderer and half-brother Sogdianus and to ascend the throne as Darius II (424–404

BCE). This king, through the agency of his son Cyrus (the Younger) as Satrap of Asia Minor, successfully supported Sparta in the course of the Peloponnesian War by financing a fleet in return for Sparta's consent to the Persian right of rule over the Ionian cities.

Although the succession to the throne from Darius to his eldest son Arses (throne name: Artaxerxes II) proceeded smoothly, the new king soon had to tackle a two-front crisis. Egypt was lost between 401 and 399 BCE; and at exactly that time, the younger brother Cyrus made a futile attempt to replace his brother on the throne with the help of Spartan and Greek mercenaries. As in the battle for the throne, Artaxerxes II was similarly successful in securing Syria and Palestine and in fending off Spartan interventions in Asia Minor. The king not only became the negotiator and guarantor of the Greek general peace of 387/6 BCE ("The King's Peace"), which confirmed his right of rule over the cities of Asia Minor and Cyprus; he was also able to thwart the plans of the Salaminian king Euagoras to make himself lord of Cyprus, and he succeeded in putting an end to the so-called Great Satraps Revolt in the 360s.

A new struggle for the throne in 359 caused the death of the crown prince Darius and of two of his brothers and helped another son of Artaxerxes, Ochus, to become the new king (Artaxerxes III). It was under him that the Persian empire rose to a new peak of power. After having suppressed the revolt of Tennes in Phoenicia, Artaxerxes was able to regain Egypt in 343 BCE. Five years later, the king and most of his relatives were killed in a bloodbath for which the eunuch Bagoas is said to have been responsible; even the only surviving son of Artaxerxes, Arses, who had been put on the throne by Bagoas as Artaxerxes IV, was able to enjoy his patron's favor for just two years before he too was put away. Then Bagoas backed Artashata's right to the throne. He was a nephew of Artaxerxes II and famous for his bravery and courage. One of the first official acts of Darius III, as Artashata called himself after his accession, was to rid himself of the scheming eunuch. Darius's success was short-lived, however. Soon Alexander, the king of Macedon, invaded the Persian empire and toppled the Achaemenid ruler in a string of whirlwind victories.

(p. 203) The Time in Between: Iran in Hellenistic Times

The untimely death of Alexander in Babylon in 323 BCE unleashed a bitter fight for his succession. In the wars between the diadochi, as the rival successors of Alexander are called, Seleucus I asserted himself in the eastern parts of Alexander's empire (cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993; Wiesehöfer 1996a; Invernizzi 2007). A treaty and the following diplomatic and commercial relations with the Indian Maurya empire, military campaigns in northeastern Iran, and the appointment of the king's half-Iranian son Antiochus as vice-king of the territories beyond the Euphrates were measures that, in combination, were able to secure the eastern border of Seleucus's realm. For a long time, the core of the empire consisted of the territories from Syria in the west to western Iran in the east; only "the view from the west" of most of our sources makes Mesopotamia (Seleucia-on-the-Tigris) take second place to the region of the four "sister cities" of

Iranian Empires

Antioch, Seleucia Pieria, Apamea, and Laodicea in northwestern Syria. Like in Babylonia, the Seleucids also followed indigenous political and cultural traditions in Iran and aimed at reconciliation and cooperation with the regional and local elites. However, both Seleucus and his successors also tried to move in new directions with the foundation of cities (like Ai Khanum in Bactria) and military colonies and with the creation of a specific Seleucid dynastic cult (probably in the reign of Antiochus III). But defeat against Rome at Magnesia in Asia Minor (190 BCE) seriously weakened Seleucid power and resulted in the final loss of almost all territories in the east. This process accelerated because the Seleucids suffered military setbacks (like in Judaea against the traditionalist Maccabean Jews) and made unsuccessful raids on sanctuaries (like in Elymais in the Zagros Mountains) in search of financial revenues and ideological compensation for political and military failures. In Mesopotamia and Iran the Parthians and the Greco-Bactrians, respectively, replaced the Seleucids as masters in the second century BCE; the latter, however, had soon to give way to the Yuezhi (Kushan) in northeastern Iran.

The Parthian Empire

When the Seleucids were weakened and distracted by wars with the Ptolemies and by struggles for the throne around the middle of the third century BCE, Andragoras, the satrap of Parthia (within today's Turkmenistan/northeastern Iran), attempted to secede from his overlords. However, he soon died in his fight against the seminomadic Parni who, after the occupation of the northern parts of Parthia, tried to bring further territories of this province under their control. Under the leadership of Arsaces, the new lords of Parthia, who were soon called "Parthians" after their new home and their kings "Arsacids" after the founder of their royal dynasty, conquered Hyrcania and were able to maintain their territories in their fight against Seleucus II (Schippmann 1980; Wolski 1993; Wiesehöfer 2009a: 92–96; www.parthia.com). (p. 204) It is from this initial phase of their rule that the so-called Parthian era starts with the first of Nisan (April 14) 247 BCE. After having temporarily been forced to acknowledge Seleucid supremacy during Antiochus III's campaigning in the east (210–205 BCE), the Parthians seceded a second time after the Great King's defeat against Rome and extended the borders of their realm—especially under Mithridates I (171–139/8 BCE)—to western Iran and Mesopotamia; at the same time, they annexed parts of the Greco-Bactrian empire with its center in today's northern Afghanistan.

Setbacks in the east and in the west were overcome by Mithridates II (124/3–88/7 BCE) who once and for all secured the empire's position of supremacy in Iran and Mesopotamia. In the course of their clashes with the Armenians, the Parthians also came into the focus of Roman attention: treaties with the generals Lucullus (69) and Pompey (66) defined the Euphrates as the common border. When Crassus violated these agreements and invaded Parthian territory, his army suffered a crushing defeat at Carrhae (53). Caesar planned a war of revenge that was cut short by his assassination in 44 BCE. Parthian counterattacks also failed after initial successes in Syria and Asia Minor (41–38). Then Marc Antony tried his luck, but he had to retreat disgracefully from Armenia and Media Atropatene. Only Augustus was lucky (20 BCE): dynastic problems in the Parthian empire and Roman threats forced Phraates IV to return the legionary standards and Roman captives, taken at Carrhae, and to acknowledge Roman supremacy in Armenia; the Roman emperor, who in return renounced an offensive policy on the eastern front, grandly celebrated the treaty as a big victory in both word and images.

In the following decades, the status of the geopolitically and strategically decisive region of Armenia became the most disputed question in Parthia's relations with Rome. In this struggle, the Roman emperors repeatedly made use of Phraates IV's descendants who lived in Rome and were now sent off to Parthia in order to change conditions in Rome's favor. Only the treaty of Rhandaia (63 CE) between Vologeses I and Nero's negotiators was able to resolve the Armenian conflict for some decades. The Armenian monarchy became Parthian secundogeniture by Roman consent, and Vologeses's brother Tiridates was provided by Nero with the symbols of Armenian royal dignity in an elaborate ceremony. After a new phase of instability in Parthian domestic and foreign affairs, King

Iranian Empires

Osroes's unlawful intervention in Armenia gave the Romans under Trajan the pretext for his great eastern campaign (114–117 CE), which saw his forces plunder the Parthian capital and conquer all of Mesopotamia. However, pro-Parthian revolts in the newly won territory and among the Jewish diaspora in the Mediterranean quickly forced the Roman emperor to retreat from the shores of the Persian Gulf. After Trajan's death, his successor Hadrian gave up the Parthian acquisitions of his predecessor with great foresight and restricted his ambitions to safeguarding the Euphrates borderline and Roman influence in Armenia. In Mesene (southern Mesopotamia), however, an independent ruler of Arsacid stock remained in office until 151 CE. Both Hadrian and his successor as Roman emperor, Antoninus Pius, cultivated political and economic relations with the neighbors in the east. After a temporarily successful Parthian attack on Armenia and Syria in the time of Vologeses IV, the Romans struck back in 161–165 CE. As in the time of Trajan, the Roman general Avidius (p. 205) Cassius was able to capture the Parthian main residence, Ctesiphon, and to occupy northern Mesopotamia. But an outbreak of epidemic disease, which later spread to the entire Mediterranean world, forced the Roman army to retreat, suffering heavy losses. The campaigns of the emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla (after 195 and 216 CE), who tried to take advantage of quarrels for the throne within the Arsacid royal family, also did not significantly change the status quo ante despite some limited successes (e.g., the establishment of the province of Mesopotamia in the border area of modern Turkey and northeastern Syria). All these Roman campaigns were hampered by the fact that Parthian control of the regions east of the Tigris, not least of the Iranian heartlands, remained unaffected and enabled the Arsacids to recover both militarily and economically. But Roman invasions and the civil war between the Arsacid brothers Artabanus IV and Vologeses VI had other effects inside the Parthian realm. They enabled ambitious petty kings from Persis to pursue their own plans: the Sasanians Pabag and Ardashir extended their power to the whole of southwestern Iran during the first two-and-a-half decades of the third century CE. It was the latter who on April 28, 224 CE was able to defeat and kill the last Arsacid Great King Artabanus IV in battle and to ascend the throne of the whole of Iran.

The Sasanian Empire

Iranian Empires



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 7.2 The Parthian and Sasanian Empires

All lands of the former Parthian empire, except for Armenia, came under Sasanian control during the reign of the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir (224–239/40? CE; Wiesehöfer 2010). His advent to the throne marks the beginning of a more offensive policy toward Rome, which under his son

Shabuhr I (240–271/72 CE) scored significant successes: the campaigns of the latter affected not only Armenia but even shook the foundations of the Roman empire. His armies advanced briefly as far as Antioch and Cappadocia, and Valerian became the first Roman emperor to be captured by the Sasanian enemy. Despite all later setbacks (e.g., against the Roman deputy, Odaenathus of Palmyra), and if we believe his own account of his reign, Shabuhr’s empire stretched from Mesopotamia in the west to Peshawar in the east. Succession disputes and the aggressive eastern policy of the Roman emperor Diocletian at the end of the century caused the Sasanians to incur the loss of regions to the east of the Tigris and Armenia for several decades. Only Shabuhr II could erase the memory of “the Peace of Disgrace” concluded at Nisibis (298 CE), when he managed, after long battles, not only to drive the Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, away from Ctesiphon but also succeeded in wresting a great part of the lost territory from Julian’s successor Jovian, both by military and diplomatic means (363 CE). In the course and aftermath of these wars severe persecutions of Christians took place in the Sasanian empire. From a Christological point of view these Christians were *not yet* divorced from their fellow believers in the West, and after the “Constantinean Revolution” they had thus become Rome’s protégés and were regarded as partisans of the Roman cause by the Sasanian authorities. The eastern part of Armenia also became Sasanian again in the year 387 CE (Map 7.2). (p. 206)

(p. 207) During the subsequent century, however, the Hephthalites, or “White Huns,” were to become an even greater problem than the Romans, with whom a mutually satisfactory agreement was reached around 400 CE. The Hephthalites were tribes that had pushed forth from Dsugaria into Central Asia and now ruled, among other territories, Sogdia, Bactria, the western part of the Tarim plain, and northwestern India. They utterly defeated King Peroz twice (465 and 484 CE) and forced him to pay tribute to them, which, combined with famines, led the Sasanian empire to the brink of internal collapse. It was at that moment that a man by the name of Mazdak emerged to proclaim a religious and ethical program, which called for the just distribution of ownership. His teachings, thanks to their “Zoroastrian” terminology, attractive dogmatics, and theology as well as the charity practiced within the Mazdakite communities in a time of widespread poverty and hardship, won over many people in Iran and Mesopotamia, not only those without means

but also members of the aristocratic elite. For a long time, the reign of King Kawad (488–496; 498–531 CE) was shaped by the conflict between the new king and his pro-Hephthalite and pro-Mazdakite followers and a pro-Roman and anti-Mazdakite party. It was probably only Kawad's wish to establish his son Khusro as successor to the throne in the 520s that broke the bonds between the king and the Mazdakites and led to violent actions of the Mazdakites against the landowning aristocracy, to which many of the empire's nonurban population were liable for compulsory service and duties. Soon, however, Kawad and Khusro would brutally suppress the uprising. Both took advantage of the weakening of the aristocracy to implement fundamental social, economic, and military reforms.

The establishment of internal peace and stability allowed Khusro to become active again externally. In 540 CE he broke the "Eternal Peace" that had been concluded with the eastern Roman Emperor Justinian. The payment of "tribute" (cf. Börm 2008b)—a single payment had already been agreed upon in 532 CE—was raised in 562 with a new treaty that, however, left the strategically important region of Lazica (Colchis) to the Romans. Khusro's conquest of South Arabia, and the subsequent expulsion from there of the Aksumites (Ethiopians), who were in alliance with Constantinople, indirectly weakened eastern Rome's position. In the east he even managed to destroy the empire of the Hephthalites with the help of the Western Turks around 560 CE.

Khusro I's reign was also the cultural climax in the history of the Sasanian empire. As a ruler with manifold interests, it was under him that Iran developed into a center for the exchange of learning between East and West. But under Khusro's son Hormezd IV (after 579 CE) new conflicts were already arising between king and aristocracy, and severe warfare with the Turks aggravated the situation further. The tide seemed to be turning again, however, both internally and externally, when Hormezd's son Khusro II managed to crush the rebellion of Wahram Chobin, a pretender to the throne, with Roman help in 591 CE. Moreover, he was able to reach as far as Egypt and the gates of Constantinople (626 CE) in his war with eastern Rome (602–628 CE). The fragments of the True Cross were taken from Jerusalem to Ctesiphon in 614 CE. The counterattacks of the Roman Emperor (p. 208) Heraclius and his Turkish allies, however, forced the Sasanians to surrender the newly conquered territories. Khusro II himself was brought down and killed by a revolt of the aristocracy (628 CE). Following a period of anarchy with frequently changing rulers, Yazdgerd III was made king. He would become the last of the Sasanian rulers. The empire's powers and resources had been strained by the wars against Constantinople and the Turks and the self-interest of various aristocratic parties, and Yazdgerd III was unable to stem the tide of Muslim armies that in the 630s had begun invading from the Arab Peninsula. But if the Persians were defeated, it was not without putting up a good fight. After the first Arab attack (in 636), when the irrigated alluvium of Mesopotamia was overrun and the capital, Ctesiphon, was laid under siege, Yazdgerd's forces staged a counterattack (in 637) that drove the Arabs back into the desert. This defeat has left a trace in the early Islamic sources where it is mentioned as the Battle of the Bridge; it then probably took several months for the Arabs to regroup, rally additional troops from all over Arabia, and finally risk confronting the Persians in open battle at Qadisiyya in

Iraq on January 6, 638 CE. Following the defeats at Qadisiyya and at Nihawand in Media (642 CE), Yazdgerd retreated to eastern Iran, where he was assassinated at Merw (651 CE). The Sasanian empire became part of the caliphate. Against the view of a “weak empire” (Rubin 1995, 2000, 2004), one has rightfully stressed the factors of stability of the empire and the special historical circumstances of its downfall in the 630s to 650s CE (Howard-Johnston 1995, 2006, 2008, 2010).

Features of the State

The Achaemenid Empire

“The land of the King,” as the Persian empire is called in Persian treaties with the Greeks, was subdivided into provinces (“satrapies”), which were governed by satraps (“protectors of the empire”), who were installed for an indefinite period and thus could become very influential. But administrative structures cannot easily be made out (Kuhrt 2001; Briant 2002; Wiesehöfer 2004, 5–101; 2009b, 11–73; Tuplin 2004; 2008; in press; Allen 2005; Huyse 2005; Klinkott 2005; Brosius 2006, 6–78; sources: Kuhrt 2007). First, the royal inscriptions do not present the empire as an ensemble of administrative units but of “lands” or “peoples.” Second, it is not always clear what the titles and names, used by Greek authors to denote various functionaries and administrative districts, referred to in the Persian context. And third, the boundaries of provinces were drawn up afresh from time to time and can rarely be defined with precision. But it is quite clear that there never existed uniformity of the administrative structures on a provincial level and of the relations between the official authorities and the subjects. Depending on tradition, members of royal houses, Persian aristocrats, local dynasts, or city kings acted differently (p. 209) on or below the satrapal level, comparable with each other only because of their common responsibility to the Great King or the satrap. If necessary, supraregional office bearers were installed; and according to political calculation and/or because of particular merits certain populations, like the mountain tribes of the Zagros who could be controlled only with great difficulties, enjoyed special privileges.

Unlike in the mature Roman empire, only a few non-Persians were allowed to reach the highest political and military positions. Nevertheless, the kings entrusted members of the provincial elites or even foreigners with important honors or tasks. They let them benefit from privileges and gifts and invited them to collaborate, to imitate Achaemenid royal virtues and royal behavior, and to take over Persian customs and traditions, and so made them their followers. On the other hand, political and personal relations on a regional or even local level are much more decisive for the cohesion of an empire than promotion of a very select few to the highest positions of government. And it is just here, below the satrapal level, that we can detect a great amount not only of autonomy but also of Persian indigenous cooperation and indigenous imitation of Persian models. We know of

numerous examples of marital connections between Persian officers and functionaries and female members of important provincial families; Darius II and his half-sister and wife Parysatis, offspring of Artaxerxes I and his Babylonian wives, verify the fact that even half-provincials could get to the throne. At the satrapal level, locals occupied leading positions, like the Hecatomnids in Caria, Jewish or Samaritan governors in Yehud or Samaria, or the city kings of Phoenicia and Cyprus. Archaeology has proven that those indigenous elites orientated themselves not only toward local, but also toward royal models, as far as palace architecture, style of home décor, dress, jewelry, and public appearance were concerned.

A similar flexibility also determined the kings' relations with their neighbors beyond the borders. In the West, for instance, they tried to make the Macedonian king, or Athens in the time of Cleisthenes, accept Persian orders in foreign affairs (and to symbolically reinforce these treaties by giving "earth and water") in exchange for military or financial support. Although we are only badly informed about the situation on the northeastern front, there is every reason to believe that the Persian kings and the Scythian "tribes" agreed on an arrangement (economic exchange versus military service), which was highly profitable to both sides.

As for the military, Iranian soldiers, local peoples, and deportees were allocated land parcels that carried with them the obligation to perform specified military duties when required. The lots could be identified according to the kind of service required: "bow land" for archers, "horse land" for cavalymen, and "chariot land" probably relating to chariot drivers. The assigning of such "fief holdings" clearly aimed at fulfilling imperial army requirements and occupying the imperial lands. Besides, our sources reveal that, after the empire's formative phase, general conscriptions were relatively infrequent and routine needs were often fulfilled by garrisons or mercenaries. Thus, at times the duty associated with the landholding was discharged in the form of a silver tax. But this did not weaken the strengths of the Persian armies: Enough evidence survives to show that the names of the (p. 210) original grantees, and the expected military service associated with the grant, were kept on satrapal army registers. Since the grants could not be sold, when a demand came to supply a cavalry soldier or a chariot driver, and the descendant of the grantee was not in a position to carry out the obligation, he was obliged to supply and equip a substitute to perform the service on his behalf. As is clearly shown during Alexander's invasion, there is thus no reason to suppose that the empire was ever overdependent on hired Greek mercenaries—who, by the way, mostly served in the westernmost regions—and incapable of raising an army throughout its existence when necessary.

The tribute was charged and collected at the provincial level. Thus, the Achaemenids relied on the traditions of pre-Persian times and to the old land registers wherever this was possible and there was no need for a reform (Tuplin 1987; Briant 2002, 388–421). Although very often stated otherwise, Herodotus's so-called tribute list (3.89) does not mirror Achaemenid fiscal realities and is thus only relevant for a study of the author's worldview (Wiesehöfer 2007b, 33). Hyparchs on the middle level and chiliarchs and civic

self-governing bodies on the lower level were at the satraps' service in western Asia Minor; they were also familiar with the tax privileges or special duties of people, estates, villages, cities, or holy shrines. One part of the taxes—in the form of precious metals—was transported to the empire's centers; another one remained in the province to be used by the satrap in accordance with royal orders. Contributions in kind, stored up in warehouses and granaries, served the provisioning of garrisons and workers. It is impossible to determine the size of the king's revenue and the wealth hoarded in the treasuries of the empire; but the riches of the Persian king and his satraps, and what these could effect, was certainly seen as frightening and a potential source of corruption by many Greek politicians. Although the enormous booty Alexander is reported to have taken might cause amazement or even skepticism, one must take into consideration the fact that those treasures had been heaped up over a period of many decades. Apart from that, they served the maintenance of the redistributive exchange system between the king and his subjects and, in a broader sense, the securing of the ruler's extraordinary political position.

In contrast, the royal Achaemenid coinage (Alram 2012) seemed to serve a single purpose: that of displaying the "royal hero" in a variety of warlike postures. The limited circulation of these coins (the Tigris and Euphrates river valley, for example, continued its use of silver ingots as the most important medium of exchange; while the central Iranian regions relied on the exchange of natural produce and other premonetary forms of currency) shows that in most parts of the empire there was no real connection between coinage and the exaction of tribute. *Sigloi*—the Persian silver coins—do not appear in Babylonia and Persia until the fourth century BCE. There is also no evidence that the Persians ever attempted to enforce the exclusive use of royal currency in any region of the empire. In fact, in most regions that used coins as currency, the royal stamp was less commonly used than currency issued by the satraps (provincial governors), local dynasties, or cities. The Great Kings may well have supported the minting of any coins that would come back to them (p. 211) in the form of tribute. For many "foreign" transactions, "Greek money" was considered more appropriate. The policy on coinage represents the economic, cultural, and administrative diversity of the kingdom in the same way as the hoarding of treasures for political purposes is suited to the character of Persian kingship.

The infrastructural and agricultural measures initiated by the Achaemenid government (the extension of the road system, the maintenance of and care for river and canal traffic, as well as irrigation and the provision of drinking water and new crops), modeled on Near Eastern examples, but at the same time expanded and optimized, led the communication and transport system to a new peak, made the rapid transfer of troops possible, and improved the dietary basis of the royal subjects. The success of these measures is underlined by the Greco-Roman conceptual and practical preoccupation with the Persian *angaros* system ("royal post") and the famous Persian institution of the *paradeisos*, a walled garden and game park that not only served royal needs of distraction and display of physical prowess but also was meant to represent the whole empire *en miniature* with the help of exotic plants and animals. On the whole, the economy of the Near East in the

Iranian Empires

Persian period (Bedford 2007) shows continuities with the preceding Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires with certain developments in land tenure, business practices, and legal instruments for Babylonia; the postulated economic growth, however, cannot be quantified because of the scarcity of the available evidence.

The adoption of Aramaic as the lingua franca of the empire, which had strong effects on the development of Near Eastern languages and scripts, as well as the influence of Persian political and cultural institutions on both that of the neighbors in the west and of the Achaemenids' successors as rulers of Asia, bear further witness to the impact of Persian rule. Wherever possible, the Persian kings took over well-established institutions and functionaries who promised to be loyal. Wherever possible, they asked local authorities and committees to find solutions to and make decisions about problems on the spot and promoted institutions like holy shrines, as long as they helped to bring about peace and unity and did not stir up anti-Persian resentment. Wherever possible, they granted new or confirmed old privileges, proved themselves to be generous and grateful rulers, and even abstained from personal revenge on former enemies if they, like Themistocles, changed sides. To the deeds of the subjects they applied a clear and simple standard: loyalty (i.e., the acknowledgment of Persian rule through the payment of tribute and military service) was rewarded, disloyalty was severely punished. "As a generalization, the Persians fostered good relations with organizations and leading persons in subjugated territories as a means of pacification and thus lowering the costs of running the empire. Respect for the cults of subjugated peoples, the use of local elites as administrators of subjugated territories, and the fostering of an imperial ideology that encouraged a view of mutual benefit, all enhanced the opportunity for economic [and political] performance" (Bedford 2007, 322).

Apart from those composite elements there are others that might be called "fractal," aiming at uniformity: thus, there were royal garrisons at strategically important places, supported by the respective satrap, but led by commanders who (p. 212) were appointed by the Great King and who were responsible only to him. And the attendants and informants at the satrapal courts (the "eyes and ears" of the Greek sources) whom the Greeks falsely thought of as members of a royal intelligence agency might be called "fractal elements" of Persian rule as well. Whenever former local potentates and officials, who had supported the Persian conquerors, were able to maintain their political or social positions, they were dependent on the Persian authorities. Others, who retained honored social positions within their own society, were recruited into the Great King's entourage, thereby losing their former political or military power. Similar modifications of traditional usage can be discerned within the sphere of religious policy. Although acknowledging local traditions in order to secure the loyalty of the conquered people and the staff of their holy shrines and to ensure control of the latter's wealth, the Great Kings also were not willing to allow any doubt about their supremacy in religious affairs: through the destruction of the shrines of rebellious people, through the reinforcement of the cohesion of the Persian communities in the provinces with the help of Iranian cults, through minor

but meaningful changes within rituals or ceremonies. The same tendency applies to the employment of Aramaic as a lingua franca, which changed local linguistic behavior insofar as it created a new sphere of “official” imperial statements.

The practice of uprooting individuals or groups and transplanting them to distant lands is well attested in Achaemenid times (Briant 2002, s.v. “deportations”), although there are no examples of genuine mass deportations (in the Assyrian or Roman sense). It is also not easy to determine the social and political status of the deportees: Greeks are attested on graffiti and on tablets at Persepolis, but we cannot be sure that all of them were deportees. The same problem applies to the *hatru* communities (Bedford 2007, 318–319) of Babylonia, where not all of their members were deportees or their descendants. Nevertheless, it was this combination of granted autonomy and strict supervision that contributed to the success of the Persian way of empire building.

The ideological traits of Persian kingship (cf. also Root 1979; Ahn 1992), heralded empire-wide in images and inscriptions, are the following. Firstly, kingship is firmly rooted in Persia, or more precisely Persis, as well as in the Aryan ethnic and cultural community, and requires descent from the family of Achaemenes. Scholars were able to show how Darius I and his successors successfully used Avestan (Zoroastrian) and secular (oral) Iranian folk traditions (about legendary Iranian kings) to make their rule part of an Iranian “historical” continuum (Huyse in press; cf. Skjærvø 2005). The Persians, at the same time, stand out among all peoples on account of their abilities and their special relationship to the ruler. Persian kingship differs from that of the neighbors and predecessors, because it surpasses them in power (“king of kings”), not least thanks to the unequalled number of “lands” or “peoples” that acknowledge the rule of the Persian king. Secondly, Persian kingship is characterized by a special relationship between the ruler and the gods, though the king is not attributed with divine descent or godlike qualities. Auramazda “and the other gods that are” bestowed the kingdom on Darius (p. 213) (or Xerxes); “by the favor of Auramazda” he has been elected and installed and—successfully—rules the empire. As his “representative” on earth, he is vested with a kind of royal charisma (*farnah*). Thirdly, as his kingship owes itself to the favor of Auramazda, the king is obliged to protect the god’s good creation. He is capable of doing so because the god has given him the ability to tell right from wrong, and because he has special qualities that are conducive to the promotion of justice and the protection of order. Although an absolute monarch, he is capable of being impartial and self-controlled; he judges, rewards, and punishes not at his own discretion, but fair and steadily; as a good horseman, warrior, and farmer he is able to ward off the dangers threatening his empire (Wiesehöfer 2008). This is why the violent death of a king (his murder or his death on the battlefield) endangers the God-given imperial order just like the disloyalty of the king’s subjects. Order, not chaos, peace, not tension, good conduct of the subjects and royal generosity, not disloyalty and kingly misbehavior are the values celebrated in the inscriptions and the imagery of the royal residences. As far as former independent territories are concerned, the Persian kings not only had no problems in adapting their behavior to the royal ideologies of those foreign cultures; on the contrary, they were eager to gain advantages from using them. In the context of his official and social

functions both in the palace and as a traveling king (Allen 2005; Brosius 2007), the ruler on the one hand emphasizes the master-servant relationship between himself and all his subjects (e.g., when distributing gifts or arranging banquets). On the other hand he, at the same time, gives the impression of being accessible and concerned with the worries of his subjects.

Although something like a “Persian national identity” can be noticed in the royal inscriptions, imperial ideology at the same time aimed at integrating the elites of the provinces within an empire-wide ruling-class culture, even at integrating subject peoples into a kind of imperial “symbolic universe.” No inhabitant of the empire was forced to choose between an “imperial” and a “local” identity; however, nobody was granted the option of declining this second identity by rebelling against Persian rule.

It has rightly been pointed out that the takeover of Iranian terms from the “ideological,” administrative, or socioeconomic spheres within different regional languages does not mean that the institutions they were used to denote were necessarily identical (as, for example, the system of Persian measures and weights surely was, which can be detected in many parts of the empire; Stolper 1999, 1118–1119). On the other hand, the spreading of the Persian word *data-* (“law,” “order”) into almost all languages of the ancient Near East is a good example of the effectiveness of an elementary “ideological” vocabulary, propagated by the center to underline the authority of the Great King. *Data-* must, of course, not be misunderstood as a kind of “imperial law” or an imperial collection of royally authorized local regulations, but has to be taken as a term for every royal decision, every order published by the king (Wiesehöfer 1995). The personal character of this royal law/ordinance is stressed again and again, and it even seems to replace the concept of a divine law (Lecoq 1997, 167; cf. Wiesehöfer 2008).

(p. 214) As has already been noted, the Achaemenid empire knew the idea of a universal empire propagated and symbolically promulgated by the king; there was also a significant amount of imitation of kingly behavior and royal virtues by the provincial and local elites. But there was never a process of “Persianization” at work comparable to the processes normally referred to as “Romanization” among classicists. Firstly, the Old Persian language, Persian culture, and Persian religion did not play a role comparable to their Roman counterparts (Persian culture was itself a highly eclectic culture). And such a role was not even intended for all of them by the Achaemenid kings. Apart from that, Achaemenid (i.e., royal Persian) culture and art were strictly connected with the idea of the strong, generous, and rightful king as the gods’ representative on earth, and therefore both came to an abrupt end with the fall of the empire. Secondly, the Persians never fully developed an ideological system that might have replaced regionally or locally constructed solidarities by empire-wide internal coherence, as the adoption of Christianity during the fourth century CE at least held out the promise of doing in the Mediterranean. That is why many of the lasting effects of Persian rule only became visible long after the fall of the empire. Thirdly, the Persians had neither the means nor the manpower and the ideological resources to impose a new political and ideological system on all their subjects, although Persian ideology, court art, and practices surely had an

Iranian Empires

impact on conquered people (especially their elites). What is normally called Persian “tolerance” was just a way to keep the conquered people quiet; although necessity shaped the strategy, Darius’s way of consolidating the empire nevertheless is proof of the king’s far-sightedness. Fourthly, there was no such Persian sense of mission as we can find, for example, in Roman literary works. Fifthly, although Darius I and his successors seem to have been deeply influenced by Zoroastrian (Avestan) terminology and ideas (which they modified to serve their political needs), Zoroastrianism never became an important factor for the coherence of the empire, unlike Christianity in late antiquity (Stausberg 2002, 157–186).

Even so, the relatively thin veneer of ideological and cultural integration achieved by the Achaemenids, combined with the enduring strength of local and regional traditions, is typical of large premodern empires. It was sufficient to allow stable rule for centuries. By no means was it a moribund organism over which Alexander triumphed. Quite the reverse: shortly before the Macedonian victories, the Persians had mustered impressive military force and recovered Egypt for their empire. Explanation for the unexpected conquest of Alexander must be sought in a combination of factors. Firstly, Alexander was an excellent military leader; his army was not superior to the enemy in numbers and morale but in training, tactics, and military techniques. Secondly, Alexander acted in Achaemenid fashion already before the death of his opponent Darius, not toward his Macedonians or the Greeks, but toward the non-Greek subjects and officials of the Great King and to Darius himself. Well versed in the prerequisites of Persian kingship and benefiting from his successes, he attempted to outdo his opponent in the virtues of a Great King, to let the splendor of the founder of the empire, Cyrus, shine on himself and to draw over high Persian dignitaries to his side. He was able to offer all those who (p. 215) changed sides positions and benefices comparable with their previous privileges. Therefore, it is wrong to suppose that those subjects did not feel deeply invested in Achaemenid rule and did not really care that much who was in charge. Alexander’s successes lent him and his policy the necessary charisma. However, he could not have afforded even a single defeat, and, after all, the final conquest of the Persian empire took him more than ten years.

The Arsacid-Parthian Empire

To the Roman author Pliny the Elder the Arsacid empire appeared as an ensemble of “kingdoms” (*regna*) (for Roman views of the Parthians cf. Lerouge 2007; Schneider 2007). It is in his description that the true observation of “principalities,” which were fiscally and militarily dependent on the Arsacid “King of Kings” but enjoyed a great amount of autonomy at the same time, mingles with a hint about those structures being responsible for the weakness of the empire. Aside from the “kingdoms,” there were regions subject to the king alone and administered by “satraps” or *strategoi*, as well as frontier areas to be protected by “margraves.” The magnates of the empire possessed vast landed properties

in Iran. Whether these properties were registered for tax purposes, and if so how, are questions that remain unanswered.

As regards the structures of the state and the relations between the king and the imperial aristocracy, research has only just begun (Wiesehöfer 1998; Boucharlat 2002; Wiesehöfer 2004, 115–149; Huyse 2005; Brosius 2006, 79–138; Curtis and Stewart 2007; Invernizzi 2007; Dąbrowa 2009; sources: Hackl, Jacobs and Weber 2010). Former scholarship very often compared the Parthian state with European states of the Middle Ages, thereby assuming that the Arsacid king, like a “feudal lord,” imposed his own authority on “vassals” who were bound to lend him financial and military support in case of need in compliance with hard rules. In the light of our lack of knowledge about the exact character of that relationship, recent scholarship normally avoids this kind of terminology and comparison; instead, it just tries to describe the roles of kings and nobles whenever and wherever they meet. Among the nobles, the house of Suren played a prominent role as its head had the right to crown the king, and a “king’s council” was meant to lend him its advice. Among the princes of the regional “kingdoms,” the “kings” of Adiabene (in northern Mesopotamia) and Elymais (in southwestern Iran/the Zagros region) seem to have enjoyed special privileges. However, this does not mean that the ruler ever became elected by the nobles. Recent scholarship has also done away with the old idea that kingship never lost its “nomadic” character and that “nomadic” rules and practices shaped royal representation and the state’s military organization (for this conventional view, cf. Olbrycht 2003, 99; Olbrycht 1998). Instead, it has made clear that—after Vologeses I’s reforms, which had installed members of his family as “kings” in the most important provinces—the king could direct his satraps or those regional “kings” to provide him with armed forces. Herodian’s (p. 216) reference to the absence of a standing army (3.1.2) should therefore be interpreted as proof of a powerful, not a weak central authority and perhaps also of a survival of the Achaemenid systems of recruitment, that is, the assigning of land parcels against military service obligation. Although call-ups might have been quite time consuming they did not prevent Arsacid kings from successfully confronting attacking Roman armies. The Romans at times had to yield to the tactics and fighting strength of the Parthian army, especially to the trained interplay of heavily armored cataphracts and lighter, more mobile, mounted archers. Famous and notorious, too, was the “Parthian shot,” a volley of arrows discharged backward by the mounted bowmen while they pretended to flee.

Quarrels between the king and the nobles were decided according to the personality of the respective king, his instruments of power, the ambitions of single chiefs or members of the royal house, and very often also according to the respective situation on the domestic or foreign front. Often enough, however, the interests of king and aristocracy coincided; and often enough, rivalries between the nobles widened the scope for action by the kings. Besides, the idea of a nomadic character of Arsacid kingship has rightly been ascribed to stereotypical Roman views of their eastern opponent’s governmental structures (Hauser 2005; 2006). In view of this scholarly progress and of the shortage of

Iranian Empires

“area studies” of the “principalities” and cities on the periphery of the empire, we should be highly skeptical of the idea that the state’s “loosely knit structures” might have led to a “characteristic structural instability” of the Parthian empire.

Cities were particularly important for the social and economic development of the empire, the old, indigenous ones, as in Mesopotamia, but also the Hellenistic and Parthian foundations; as a rule, most of them reached their full economic and cultural flowering under the Arsacids. Some of them (especially Seleucia-Ctesiphon and Ecbatana) also served as mints for imperial or local use.

Arsacid kingship has been characterized as an interesting mixture of traditional (seminomadic) Parnian, adapted Achaemenid-Iranian, and borrowed Hellenistic-Seleucid elements. Part of Iranian tradition was the idea of the effects of the royal “charisma” bestowed upon the kings by the gods; royal coronation and the fostering of the memory of the empire’s founder by means of an endowment of an eternal fire and the adoption of Arsaces’s name as an official throne name are expressions of this idea. Probably in the reign of Mithridates II, the Arsacids adopted the Achaemenid title “King of Kings” and sought their royal predecessors’ genealogical company. From the first half of the second century BCE onward, they became receptive to traditions of Hellenistic kingship: for example, they took over the famous Hellenistic royal epithets (like “the Just,” “the Victorious”), at first by deliberate choice and combination, later on in a rather stereotyped order. They even imitated the institution of the “king’s Friends” at court.

Royal attitudes and royal representation are not easily detectable in our sources; however, we know of a special royal dress and of special royal insignia (like the double diadem), and we know that, like in the Achaemenid period, hunting parties, banquets, and receptions enabled the Arsacid kings to provide proof of (p. 217) their generosity. As for the religious traits of royal legitimacy (Wiesehöfer 1996b; Fowler 2005), the ancient Iranian idea of the divine right of kings still existed in Parthian times. Apart from that, the Arsacids presented themselves, probably under Hellenistic influence, as material beings with godlike qualities. It was in their time that eastern Iranian heroic tales, performed by “minstrels” at royal or noble courts, thanks to their especially attractive subject matter and their pronounced religious flavor, were able to displace or to combine with nearly all other traditions. In southwestern Iran, the home province of the Parthians’ Achaemenid predecessors, this led to the disappearance of genuine historical memory. At the same time, Iranian oral epic tradition became broader, with Arsacid princes and “vassals” being inserted in it together with their heroic deeds. Minstrels made those tales popular with kings and aristocrats, but also with the common people. However, it is only the semiofficial written Sasanian version of the “Iranian National History” that has come down to us (see below), and it is quite difficult to detect its Parthian traits.

It is generally and rightly assumed that the Arsacids and the Iranian elite of their empire, despite their “tolerance” or even promotion of other religions for political reasons, were attached to the Zoroastrian faith in some form or another (cf. Stausberg 2002, 192–204). The Jews in their old centers in Mesopotamia enjoyed a period of peace and maintained

Iranian Empires

close and positive contacts with the reigning dynasty. Thus, it is no wonder that Jewish places like Nisibis and Nehardea became centers of learning after the Bar-Kokhba revolt (135 CE), when Tannaitic refugees brought traditions of the Palestinian academies to Mesopotamia. At the beginning of the first century CE, King Izates of Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia together with his family even converted to Judaism. Cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia, as well as the inscriptions of the early Sasanians and the Manichaean tradition, prove the Arsacid empire to be the home of a lot of other traditional or recent religious groups: Christian, Gnostic, and Baptist communities, as well as those of followers of Babylonian, Arabian, and Iranian cults in the west and Hindus, Buddhists, and Jainas in the east.

Like the Achaemenid empire, the realm of the Arsacids covered territories in which many different languages were spoken, many different writing systems were used, and many different cultural traditions were current. And it was exactly this diversity of cultures that contributed to the success of the Parthian way of governing. As regards foreign thoughts and traditions, the Parthians made use of them for their own advantage and, for example in art, mingled different traditions into something new where genuine Parthian traits are no longer easily detectable. Famous characteristics of “Parthian art” are frontal representation in sculpture, dress, jewelry, and the ayvans (large halls roofed with a high barrel vault and having a square ground plan and opening on one side to a central yard).

As is proven by the early Parthian residence at Nisa in today’s Turkmenistan, the Arsacid court employed indigenous and also Greek artists who were able to create works of high quality. Ambitious writers and intellectuals among the kings’ subjects, like the Greek author Artemidorus of Artemita and others, were eager (p. 218) to explain the traditions of their people to the kings, and the rulers familiarized themselves with those traditions and sometimes even tried their hand at writing (Wiesehöfer 2000). However, it seems as if the Arsacids of later times mainly devoted themselves to the cultivation of the Iranian parts of their cultural heritage. Despite the cultural and religious “tolerance” practiced by the Arsacids, the guiding principles of their political relations with the subjects remained at any time their recognition of royal superiority and the observance of loyalty. Like the Achaemenids, the Parthians combined a large amount of local autonomy with a great deal of strict supervision; together with the strength of the Parthian army, Arsacid fostering of urbanization, agriculture, and trade, as well as the kings’ religious “tolerance” and political and personal “philhellenism,” it was this policy of carrot and stick that secured the empire’s existence and stability for almost 500 years.

The Sasanian Empire

Just like the Parthians, the Sasanians (Christensen 1944; Rubin 2000; Wiesehöfer 2004, 151–221; 2010; Huyse 2005; Daryaee 2008; 2009; cf. Dodgeon and Lieu 1991; Greatrex and Lieu 2002; Wiesehöfer and Huyse 2006; Dignas and Winter 2007; Curtis and Stewart 2008; Gignoux, Jullien, and Jullien 2009) held an aristocratic “council of the king,” which was composed of the heads of old Parthian and new southwest Iranian (that is to say,

Iranian Empires

Persian) clans, the aim of which was to confirm the rules for succession to the throne. A special kind of worship of the founder of the empire can also be made out in their case. Royal inscriptions of the early period distinguish between four specific “groups” of aristocrats: the (Middle Persian) *shahrdaran* (regional dynasts and princes of the royal family entrusted with rule over important parts of the empire), the *waspuhragan* (probably members of the Sasanian dynasty, but without direct descent from the ruler), the *wuzurgan* (heads of the most important aristocratic families, as well as other members of the high aristocracy), and the *azadan* (other noble Iranians). Female members of the royal family were granted a particular degree of esteem and attention already in the Iranian sources of the third century CE. A title such as “Queen of Queens” is thus confirmation of the unique rank of the woman who carried it, and not a sign for the kings’ close or incestuous consanguineous marriage, which is certainly known to us from Sasanian Iran. In the empire’s last but crisis-laden years, female members of the royal family could even ascend to the throne (queens Boran and Azarmigdukht).

Both the royal inscriptions and Manichean texts make it clear that not all members of the royal household were permanent members of the royal court (Wiesehöfer 2007a); especially the king’s adult sons (and other important relatives) were only temporarily in the ruler’s personal vicinity, that is, if their administrative duties or special occasions, such as festivities or wars, made it necessary to be present at court, or if the “traveling king” with his entourage happened to come to the respective prince’s province. Thus, we may distinguish between a “nuclear” court (p. 219) of permanent members and an “extended” court of people only temporarily present. It seems as if in early Sasanian times the “nuclear” court mainly consisted of members of the royal family and household, the great aristocratic landholders and magnates being only part of the “extended” court, since their main sphere of activity at that time was the management of their estates and the control of dependent peasants and tenant farmers.

In connection with the common duty to offer sacrifices for the benefit of the souls of the living and the dead, Shabuhr’s *res gestae* (Huyse 1999) lists the contemporary members of the four aristocratic status groups, mentioned above, as far as they are members of the (“extended”) court society, both by their names and, if they held offices, by their functions at court or in the empire. In early Sasanian times social ranking certainly manifested itself also at court, but, as far as the nobility is concerned, it was not only the court’s head—the king—who set the rules of that ranking: descent could be still as important as royal favor. The fact that the Sasanians had not created these “structures of standing” themselves but had taken them over from the Parthians—while at the same time enhancing the rank of the Persian, that is, southwest Iranian, aristocracy—is proven by the end of the “formula” in which the groups of nobility are presented in King Narseh’s inscription from Paikuli in Iraqi-Kurdistan: “The landholders and the princes, the grandees and the nobles and the Persians and the Parthians” (inscription of the Sasanian king Narseh from Paikuli, Middle Persian version line 3 [§5]). The loyal Parthian clans warranted continuity, but were now complemented by Persian clans without having to

give up their leading position. At a later period, other “clans” rose to the rank of magnates.

Depending on their high social, political, and economic standing, leading members of the aristocracy were also made to play an advisory and corroborative role in the process of proclaiming the king: For King Narseh and his predecessors, we might assume a “mock consultation” of the highest dignitaries of the empire, documenting an ancient right of codetermination or rather confirmation held by the nobility. In times of a powerful central authority, apart from the members of the royal household and of the higher and lower aristocracy, “outsiders” and “new men” had a good chance of being promoted to a position close to the king at the “nuclear” court by arbitrary royal patronage. It was his closeness to the king (i.e., the position of his *gah* [“throne”] at royal declarations, audiences, and banquets) and the function he fulfilled that reflected a person’s standing at the early Sasanian court, and outward dress made it manifest to a broader public. Among the most prominent marks of dignity were the tiaras, on which certain colors and symbols of a heraldic kind could point to particular ranks or distinctions. Belts studded with gems and earrings played a similar part. For the Iranian aristocracy, however, the real criterion for grandeur was for a long time not so much a title or royal distinction but lineage, and in times of crisis or during the reigns of “weak” kings the higher nobility could even force a ruler to acknowledge established career structures.

In his famous *res gestae* (ŠKZ; Huyse 1999), Shabuhr I enumerates the dignitaries, officials, and aristocrats of his empire who are, at least temporarily, close (p. 220) to him and in his vicinity at court and who are therefore entitled to have offerings made for the benefit of their souls (Weber 2008). Lists of this kind have come down to us in other inscriptions too, among them one more in the *res gestae* of the second Sasanian king (in which he refers to the reigns of Pabag and Ardashir I), and several in King Narseh’s Paikuli inscription (Inscription of the Sasanian king Narseh from Paikuli, Middle Persian version lines 6–7 [§16], lines 15–16 [§32]). They are all similarly arranged, starting with the members of the royal house, followed by members of the (seven) most important noble clans, and ending with other dignitaries and officials. As far as Shabuhr’s *res gestae* are concerned, the arrangement of names seems to be the result of a special mixture of personal and political considerations of the king; in other words, the list is evidence both for the dignitaries’ personal relationship to the king and for Shabuhr’s decisions of assigning certain people to certain offices because of their character and/or their professional skills.

Ardashir, the king of Adiabene, is at the head of the sixty-seven dignitaries of Shabuhr’s court. As this man is only mentioned in Shabuhr’s *res gestae*, we can only guess if he owed his outstanding position to his personal relationship with the king or to the importance of his province at that time or to both. Probably due to the consolidation of power under the first two Sasanids, the “extended” royal court increased considerably: Whereas the court of King Pabag (Shabuhr’s grandfather) had only consisted of eight members, and Ardashir I had appointed thirty-one dignitaries, Shabuhr I even doubled their number. In other words, empire building invoked complexity of the court and

generated rationales and structures of its own. It is a pity that we do not have a comparable view of the Arsacid court, which would allow us to recognize the special Sasanian traits of court offices and court society. It is perfectly clear that in order to get an audience with the king in early Sasanian times, people had to go through the proper channels.

Until the end of the fifth century CE, the unruly heads of the great noble houses admitted only a nominal allegiance to the central power but were virtually independent from the king in their hereditary territorial domains, and royal power and influence depended to a large degree on effective control of the provincial governors (who were mostly members of the royal clan), as well as on the active support of the majority of the higher nobles. This changed only in the late Sasanian period, when the wearing of belts, rings, clasps, and other marks of prestige required royal approval; rank bestowed by the king now came to be esteemed more highly than name and descent. This strengthening of royal power had become possible after the great crisis of state and empire that began in the mid-fifth century (see above). Land ownership was registered, and a fixed land tax, as opposed to a variable tax on farm produce, was introduced. After a census had been taken, a new poll tax was also established according to different levels of wealth. In addition, a kind of “administrative nobility” was created, and, in the case of the “cavaliers” (Middle Persian *aswaran*), a military nobility whose duty was to follow the king in his campaigns. The latter was apparently meant to replace the retainer units formed by self-equipped members of the aristocracy, troops that had never really been at the king’s command. Arab authors also introduced a new (or newly formed) lower (p. 221) nobility, the *dehkanan*, who took over the administration of the villages as their richest landowners and sometimes even owned entire villages. These had been promoted by the king, who had granted them land, money, and other assistance. They were to be his partisans at the local level (against members of the high aristocracy, who were critical of the king, and the potentially rebellious peasantry) and should also, if necessary, stand by him in military matters. In addition, the empire was divided into four military districts, and special units took on policing and border control duties. The creation of a new court elite and administration, which would no longer owe its privileges to reputation and descent, but to royal favor alone, was also in the interest of the kings, as was the backing of the lower, landowning aristocracy.

Tabari’s report of Khusro’s reforms is quite unambiguous about the fact that the late Sasanian court underwent a change: Whereas the “nuclear” court had so far been defined by members of the king’s personal household (family members and domestic staff), the other higher nobles being only temporarily members of the “extended” court, Khusro’s “nuclear” court now consisted both of royal relatives and of members of a kind of service nobility, handpicked and promoted by the ruler himself and more loyal to the king than to the clans they originally came from. It is this kind of court that is mirrored in most of the Middle Persian literary works. Those royal reforms, however, did not finally relieve the tensions between the kings and ambitious nobles. Indeed, divisions nurtured by rivalry between nobles and kings are one of the reasons for the final downfall of the empire (see below). Although former studies of Sasanian “feudalism,” as in the field of Parthian

studies (see above), very often drew unprovable or even unjustified parallels between Sasanian Iran and medieval European monarchies, the theoretical parameters of studies on late medieval and early modern courts proved to be quite useful for arranging and analyzing the source material on the Sasanian court and on power and state building in Sasanian Iran.

Sasanian royal inscriptions of the third century, but also seal legends of later times, mention a host of dignitaries and officials. These included, for instance, “petty kings” (Middle Persian *šah*) in certain regions of the empire, such as Armenia and Mesene, “satraps” (*šahrab*) in other provinces (*šahr*), and their personal assistants, as well as the officials in the “districts” and those on the ground. As we have heard, the royal court also maintained numerous functionaries and dignitaries at all times. There were administrative, military, and educational functionaries, advisers, and those active in the fields of etiquette and the cult (Gyselen 1989, 2002; cf. Wiesehöfer 2004, 183ff., 291ff.). As already mentioned, following the reforms of Khusro, many of these officials preferred royal interests over those of their own families.

Next to the aristocracy, it was religious dignitaries who carried special importance in the empire. These Zoroastrian “priests” (*mobads*, *herbeds*) were experts not only in matters of religion (e.g., through the upholding of the religious tradition) but also in matters of administration and the law (as *dadwars*, i.e., “judges”). Christians, for example, would get to know them as harsh judges in their trials. A real hierarchy of offices and functions, however, only developed from the fourth (p. 222) century on, in imitation of monarchical power. This hierarchy reached from simple officials on the ground to the “chief of the *mobads*” at the top. Lower state functionaries, craftsmen, city merchants, physicians, astronomers, “scientists,” and “singers,” as well as the professional servants and staff of the court and the estates of the aristocracy, must be counted among the “middle classes” of the empire. Peasants represented the great bulk of Iran’s population. But it was those lessees who, for centuries, had been the aristocracy’s bondsmen who profited in particular from Khusro’s reforms as they advanced to become free tillers of their own plots of land and thus also accessible to the tax demands of the state. Although legally defined as “objects,” in the Sasanian empire slaves were also seen as human beings, which distinguished them from other property and, at the same time, protected them from excessively cruel treatment. This did not save them from being sold, rented, or given as gifts, of course, and the products of a slave’s labor would also always belong to his or her owner.

As in the case of virtually all states of antiquity, agriculture was the fundamental economic activity in the Sasanian empire (see below). Apart from this, many subjects of the “king of kings” earned their livelihood in the various crafts, in royal “workshops,” and in small private businesses. Many of the professionals employed by the king were men who had been deported from Syria and other regions and resettled in Iran during the reigns of Shabuhr I or Khusro I or their descendants. Workers recruited by the state, or prisoners of war, worked in the textile industry of Khuzistan, in the construction industry, and as ironsmiths, goldsmiths, locksmiths, and dyers. The bridges, dams, and irrigation

works built by Roman prisoners of war at Shushtar (the famous *Band-i Qaisar*, “Caesar’s bridge”) and other places in Khuzistan are still impressive today. Like the Parthians, the Sasanians were also trading their own and foreign products from west to east and vice versa. Just like the Parthians, they cultivated contacts to India by sea and to China by land. But both the Byzantines and the Sasanians tried to find ways to further their own advantage in trade to the exclusion of the other side.

Scholars very much argue over the strength of the empire’s economy. Whereas some of them assume that it was weak, primitive, and mostly depending on barter trade, others warn against underestimating the economic capacities of late antique Iran and Mesopotamia. In early Sasanian times some parts of the land were under the direct control of the king, while royal control (i.e., collection of taxes, conscription into the army) affected other parts of the land, namely those in the possession of the aristocracy, only by proxy. While at that time rulers could only found cities on “royal land,” the weakening of the aristocracy through the revolts of the late fifth century allowed the kings to turn the land of the aristocracy into royal land (Wiesehöfer 2004, 189–191, 292–293). The fiscal reforms of Khusro I (see above), which established fixed poll taxes and land taxes (Arab *jizya* and *kharaj*), led, albeit only temporarily, to a strengthening of royal power as well as a relaxation on the royal “fiscal front.” They provided the king with greater leeway politically, in both the domestic and foreign arena; and they constitute the background for the late Sasanian patronage of the sciences, arts, and literature as well as renewed animosity toward Byzantium.

(p. 223) A good deal of what is known of the Sasanian army dates from the time after Khusro I’s reforms. As far as the equipment and tactics of their troops are concerned, the Sasanians stuck to the Parthian model for a long time, especially regarding the cooperation of heavily armored cavalry and mounted archers (and sometimes even war elephants). Sasanian infantry did not enjoy the same good reputation. The maximum size of the Sasanian army may have been between 50,000 and 100,000 soldiers. The Sasanians also became experts in siege warfare, this time imitating the Roman model. Battles were usually decided by a forceful attack of the cavalry, coupled with a shower of arrows from the archers. The king or general would be situated in the center, near the imperial standard, and protected by elite troops (Whitby 1994). This lineup, alongside the Persians’ alleged lack of stamina in close contact fighting, was the reason for many a Sasanian defeat. If the commander fled or fell, the soldiers, too, would give up the fight. Khusro I divided the empire into four military districts, each militarily controlled by a *spahbed*, and special units (under a *marzban*) took on policing and border control duties. Soldiers were enrolled as state officials receiving pay and subsidies as well as arms and horses. In the end, Sasanian heavily armored cavalry would be overcome by the lightly armored and more flexible horsemen of the Muslim armies. Hired light-armed eastern Iranian or Arab mercenaries or allies, like the Lakhm bedouins, might have served them much better. The latter, with their political center at al-Hira in southern Mesopotamia, for decades had successfully protected the Arab borders against Arab raiders and the

Iranian Empires

Ghassanids, eastern Roman Arab allies with their centers in southern Syria. However, in 602 Khusro II had eliminated the last Lakhm king whom he had accused of conspiring against him.

As opposed to the Parthians, it was a decidedly Iranian attitude that characterized the Sasanian image of the ruler and his qualities. Ardashir had put himself above all other dynasties of *Eranshahr* as the “King of Kings of Iran,” while his son Shabuhr even included newly conquered territories (*Aneran* means “non-Iran”) and their dynasts (Huyse 2006; Harper 2008; Daryaee 2008a; Börm 2008a; cf. Schneider 2006 and Canepa 2009). The Sasanians also presented themselves as kings with superhuman qualities (*MpI bayan*) and as images, descendants, and tools of the gods (*yazdan*), as is shown by the title *mazdesn bay kečihz az yazdan* (“Mazdean divine lord, whose origin [is] from the gods”) for the reigning *šahanšah* (“King of Kings”) in Shabuhr I’s *res gestae* from Naqsh-e Rostam. The other male members of the royal family did not partake of the numinous charisma emanating from the reigning (and the deceased) king(s). Out of appreciation for the gods’ favors, the Sasanian kings fostered the Zoroastrian cult, bestowed benefits on priests, founded “fires,” and thus multiplied places of worship. “Fires” were also established as “Fires of Kings” and for the spiritual welfare and salvation of living and dead members of the royal household (Stausberg 2002, 206ff.). For example, Shabuhr I founded fire temples “for his own soul and glory” (*pad ama ruwan ud pannam*) and for the souls and the glory of his relatives and deceased ancestors and endowed them with the necessary means. Apart from their social functions—material help for relatives and friends and provision of a special “pension” for the founder’s descendants—those endowments were also meant to provide the donor with prestige, to establish his subjects’ trust and loyalty, and to maintain social structures of order. The deceased members of the royal family even became objects of organized worship, analogous to the Greek cult of dead heroes. The fire temples were normally named after their founders and benefactors (e.g., the fire temple founded by Shabuhr I for his own soul and glory was given the name *Husraw-Shabuhr*, “Glorious is Shabuhr”). Finally, consanguineous marriage (*xwedodah*), which the Zoroastrian theologians deemed meritorious and the Sasanians actually practiced, served not only to keep property within the family but also to secure kingship by maintaining endogamy within the clan. However, not all royal marriages were incestuous, as external alliances for political reasons are also recorded.

For a long time scholars have tried to juxtapose the religiously “tolerant” Arsacids with the supposedly “intolerant” rule of the Sasanians. Under the latter, a Zoroastrian “state church” is supposed to have joined forces with the king, rigid in religious matters, in a so-called covenant of “throne and altar” to the detriment of the non-Zoroastrian communities. Today we know that Sasanian Iran was indeed “Zoroastrianized” (whatever this may mean) to a greater extent than ever before in its history, and that the kings acted as sponsors of that faith. However, we also know that the religious and social identities of the kings and their subjects, as well as their relationships with each other, were characterized by features similar to those in the Roman empire. The royal room for

maneuver in religious affairs was much larger than normally thought. Shortly before the empire's downfall even a Christian like the general Farrukhan (Shahrbaraz) could ascend to the throne.

The rule of succession to the throne was strictly patrilineal and restricted to members of the Sasanian family. The crises over the succession that arose in the third century CE (Narseh vs. Wahram III), the fourth century CE (Ardashir II vs. Shabuhr III), and the sixth century CE (Wistahm vs. Khusro II) all demonstrate that these rules could not easily be circumvented. In the inscriptions of the early kings, legitimacy can also be established by reference to preceding rulers, thus, in Shabuhr I's case, by reference to his father Ardashir, his grandfather Pabag, to the eponymous Sasan, or even to the former Great Kings of Iran, whom the Sasanians described as their "forebears" (Gk. *pappoi*) or their "ancestors" (Gk. *progonoi*). Later they would even associate themselves with the mythical kings of Iran, and in the Iranian "National History," which they themselves decisively helped shape, they thus became the Iranian rulers par excellence, alongside the eastern Iranian Kayanids, who, like the mythical kings, are also not verifiable historically. They live on in Firdawsi's (tenth century CE) and Nizami's (twelfth century CE) epics, just as in Islamic chronicles and popular literature. The Sasanians created their own legend also at the expense of the Arsacids, whose legitimate share in the Iranian success story was deliberately downgraded (Yarshater 1983).

Individual rulers derived their legitimacy not only through their descent and bodily intactness but also through the so-called divine grace (Middle Persian *xwarrah*, Gk. *hêPersôn tyché*), that is, the God-given royal charisma, already known to us from the Parthians, through popular benefactions and their personal effort in war and at the hunt. However, unlike Hellenistic rulers the Sasanian kings (p. 225) normally did not fight at the very front but entrusted generals with the duty of leading armies. The reason for this practice was the conviction that the fate of the king was inseparably connected with the fate of the country, that the king's death should bring about chaos and disaster for Iran and its inhabitants.

The Sasanian empire was also characterized by the magnitude and diversity of its religious groups and communities. Most prominent among them were the Zoroastrians, who had populated Iran for centuries, but also Christians, Jews, Manicheans, and Mazdakites. Although Christians had already settled in Mesopotamia in small numbers since the end of the second century, it was only the deportations of Roman citizens from Syria that served as the basis for a flowering of Christian communities in the Sasanian empire. Even after the elevation of Christianity to a favored position in the Roman empire, Christological disputes among competing church communities made the Sasanian empire a refuge for many religiously persecuted Christians who had found themselves on the wrong side of state-sponsored orthodoxy in the Roman east (Nestorians, Miaphysites, and others; Wiesehöfer 1993; Jullien and Jullien 2002; Gyselen 2007; Mustafa, Tubach, and Vashalomidze 2007). Christians were persecuted not only when they were regarded as religious rivals but also when they were believed to be politically unreliable subjects. However, from 424 CE on, when they organized themselves in a church with their own

head, and when they finally broke with the Roman Church Christologically, after 484 CE, through the definite adoption of the “Nestorian” creed, the Sasanian kings countenanced this development with satisfaction. They used Christian dignitaries as ambassadors and advisers, and supported—also in their own interests—Nestorian education and science, such as in the “School of the Persians,” which was relocated from Edessa to Nisibis, or in the “university” of Jundaisabur in Khuzistan.

Jews, with their old centers in Mesopotamia, and as loyal subjects of the Sasanian kings, were, by and large, not exposed to persecution, except in a few instances. This also explains how the great rabbinic schools of Mesopotamia could engage in the process of commentary and interpretation of the Mishnah, which by the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century would eventually be codified with the edition of the “Babylonian Talmud” (Kalmin 2006).

Lastly, the Manicheans were founded as a religious community by Mani, who had been born as a Parthian subject in Mesopotamia in 216 CE, but later concentrated his missionary activities on the Sasanian empire and beyond. Following the death of their prophet in a Sasanian prison, the Manicheans, whom the Zoroastrian clergy regarded as heretics, diverted their activities to the Roman east, Arabia, and in particular further east along the Silk Route, where they would become serious rivals to Zoroastrians, Christians, Buddhists, and Muslims for the hearts of those in search of religious truth (Lieu 1992, 1999). The Mazdakites, a religious and moral reform movement, finally got persecuted because of their political opposition against Khusro I and probably also because of their attack on Zoroastrian social and moral beliefs (Gariboldi 2006; Wiesehöfer 2009c).

However, state and religious authorities did not always act in harmony with each other in their interaction with minorities. The image of a covenant of “throne and altar” is a construction of much later (Islamic?) times. In spite of Iran’s high (p. 226) degree of Zoroastrianization and the kings’ efforts to act as sponsors of that faith, there never existed a Zoroastrian “state church,” or a single *religio licita* (officially authorized religion).

Already under Khusro’s immediate successors, renewed tensions arose between the king and high aristocracy. It has been suggested that the king soon lost control of the “cavaliers,” who again became retainers of greater and virtually independent landlords, and that right from the start the king’s supreme military commanders must have been powerful territorial lords (Rubin 2000, 657). The renewed political influence of the great landlords not only led, in the course of time, to the development of retinues of fighting men but also again to independent taxation in their own domains. In contrast to such powerful and ambitious nobles, who, as in early Sasanian times, again only temporarily visited the court, the members of the king’s “nuclear” court risked losing their political weight in times of a weak ruler and of being reduced to “courtiers” in the strict sense of the word. Temporarily hindered in their ambitions because Khusro II had centralized the financial administration, the landed and military aristocracy nevertheless managed to

conspire against the king, who was reproached for his tyrannical attitude toward the nobility, his ruinous exaction of land taxes, and his bloody wars against Byzantium. After Khusro's death, kingship became the instrument of different factions of the aristocracy.

When attempting to assess the reasons for the end of Sasanian rule, the following should be noted (cf. Howard-Johnston 2010; not convincing: Pourshariati 2008). First, up to the end, the empire had to cope with the fact that it remained caught between the great powers of the steppes and the west. It was the cooperation between Turks and eastern Romans that brought Sasanian ambitions of rule over the whole Near East to an abrupt end. Second, Khusro II's abrogation of (Arab) Lakhm kingship obviously weakened the outermost defense of Iran against the desert, provoking serious disturbances among neighboring Bedouin tribes and providing an opportunity for the Islamic *umma* to exploit. Third, regional particularism was to become a serious weakness, once the prestige of the crown was seriously harmed—after the battles of Qadisiyya and Nihawand. And fourth, it was Arab strength rather than Sasanian weakness that was the principal factor. It was a combination of (i) the driving faith of the Muslim community, (ii) the well-developed statecraft and organizational capability of Mecca, (iii) distant horizons of vision on the part of the leaders of the *umma*, and (iv) the priority given to the conquest of Iran.

A Comparative Perspective

The three Iranian “world empires” stand out for their extraordinary military capacities. For a long time, no rivaling power was able to overcome them. That all three of them finally collapsed was not due to a gradual decline of military, political, or economic power but to the specific strategic planning and accomplishments (p. 227) of Alexander, Ardashir, and the Muslim generals. Their armies were the basis of the hegemony of the Iranian empires. But for most of the time military pressure and strict control went hand in hand with clever and deft political handling of subject communities. Since the empires of the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sasanians always comprised areas in which non-Iranian ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups were predominant, the problem of how to deal with foreign languages, traditions, and religious ideas, but also with political hopes and aspirations of formerly independent people, was a given from the outset for all Iranian dynasties. Cultural and ethnic diversity in combination with decentralized governmental structures were significant constraints on the state. The answer was a policy of “tolerance.” The long duration of their rule over “Iran (and non-Iran),” or the Near East respectively, on the whole speaks for a rather wise and farsighted as well as politically successful policy of the kings toward cultural, religious, or political minorities. Their religious policy offers strong support for this thesis: Demands of religious or cultic uniformity that at least might have been a current issue in late antiquity were never pressed on the subjects as a means of securing domination; at all times, the basic idea of rule was the support of loyal, and the punishment of disloyal, people and communities.

Iranian Empires

The rule of pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties is also characterized by the fact that within their realm not only Iranian traditions and ideas were cultivated (e.g., the Zoroastrian view of cosmic and worldly events, the ideals of Old Iranian kingship, or the interest in entertaining and at the same time instructive interpretations of Iranian history), but that Iranian kings, artists, and intellectuals also quite eagerly recorded, mixed, reshaped, or transmitted those of other cultures. The same tendency to build on older models, and to learn from examples but also mistakes of their predecessors, decisively shaped the dynasts' ways of administering indigenous and newly conquered territories and governing their subject peoples.

Imperial and governmental crises were only partly a result of external pressure, by Greeks, Macedonians, and Romans in the west, steppe people in the north and the east (cf. Iranian worldviews of a decisive struggle between Iran, Rum, and Turan), and last but not least by the Arabs in the south. Problems and conflicts inside the empire were at least as important: the tensions within the royal family (particularly fights for the throne), conflicts between kings and highly ambitious nobles or grand landowners, rebellions of unreliable or disloyal parts of the population, epidemics, hunger crises, and social conflicts. Besides, external and internal factors of this kind could go together at certain times, as for example during the big crisis of the Sasanian empire in the fifth century CE. Achaemenid rule came to a rather unexpected end with the victories of Alexander, not as a result of insoluble problems inside the empire, and the downfall of the Arsacid empire was due to the political and military talent of the first Sasanian ruler Ardashir who, however, benefited from the Parthian kings' engagement in a conflict with Severan Rome and in a struggle for the Arsacid throne. In the seventh century CE, both external and internal factors were responsible for the end of Sasanian rule over Mesopotamia and Iran: the collaboration of Turks and eastern Romans, the driving faith of the (p. 228) Islamic *umma* but also regional particularism, tensions between kings and nobles, and rivalries within the royal family.

References

Ahn, G. 1992. *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran: Die Voraussetzungen und die Struktur ihrer Argumentation*. Leiden.

Allen, L., 2005. "Le roi imaginaire: An audience with the Achaemenid king." In O. Hekster, and R. Fowler, eds., *Imaginary kings: Royal images in the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (Stuttgart), 39–62.

Alam, M. 2012. "The coinage of the Persian empire." In W. E. Metcalf, ed., *The Oxford handbook to Greek and Roman coins*, 61–87. Oxford.

Bedford, P. 2007. "The Persian Near East." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds. *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 302–329. Cambridge.

Börm, H., 2008a. "Das Königtum der Sasaniden: Strukturen und Probleme." *Klio* 90: 423–447.

———. 2008b. "'Es war allerdings nicht so, daß sie es im Sinne eines Tributes erhielten, wie viele meinten...': Anlässe und Funktion der persischen Geldforderungen an die Römer." *Historia* 57: 327–346.

Boucharlat, R., ed. *Les Parthes*. Dijon.

Briant, P. 2002. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A history of the Persian empire*. Winona Lake, IN.

Brosius, M. 2006. *The Persians: An introduction*. London.

———. 2007. "New out of old? Court and court ceremonies in Achaemenid Persia." In A. J. S. Spawforth, ed., *The court and court society in ancient monarchies*, 17–57. Cambridge.

Canepa, M. P. 2009. *The two eyes of the earth: Art and ritual of kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Berkeley, CA.

Christensen, A. 1944. *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. 2nd ed. Copenhagen.

Curtis, V. S., S. Stewart, eds., 2007. *The age of the Parthians*. London.

———, eds. 2008. *The Sasanian Era*. London.

Dąbrowa, E., ed. 2009. *Orbis Parthicus: Studies in memory of Professor J. Wolski*. Kraków.

Daryaee, T. 2008a. "Kingship in early Sasanian Iran." In V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, eds., *The Sasanian Era*, 60–70. London.

———. 2008b. *Sasanian Iran (224–651CE): The portrait of a late antique empire*. Costa Mesa, CA.

———. 2009. *Sasanian Persia: The rise and fall of an empire*. London.

Dignas, B., and E. Winter. 2007. *Rome and Persia in late antiquity: Neighbours and rivals*. Cambridge.

Dodgeon, M. H., and S. N. C. Lieu, eds. 1991. *The Roman eastern frontier and the Persian wars, AD226–363: A documentary history*. London.

Fowler, R., 2005. "Most fortunate roots": Tradition and legitimacy in Parthian royal ideology. In O. Hekster and R. Fowler, eds., *Imaginary kings: Royal images in the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome*, 125–155. Stuttgart.

Gariboldi, A. 2006. *Il regno di Xusraw dall'anima immortale*. Milan.

(p. 229) Gignoux, P., C. Jullien, and F. Jullien, eds. 2009. *Trésors d'Orient: mélanges offerts à R. Gyselen*. Leuven.

Greatrex, G., and S. N. C. Lieu. 2002. *The Roman eastern frontier and the Persian wars, pt. II: AD 363–630*. London.

Gyselen, R. 1989. *La géographie administrative de l'Empire sassanide*. Paris.

———. 2002. *Nouveaux matériaux pour la géographie historique de l'empire sassanide: Sceaux administratifs de la collection Ahmad Saeedi*. Paris.

———, ed. 2007. *Chrétiens en terre d'Iran: implantation et acculturation*. Leuven.

Hackl, U., B. Jacobs, and D. Weber, eds. 2010. *Quellen zur Geschichte des Partherreiches*. 3 vols. Gottingen.

Harper, P. O. 2008. "Image and identity: Art of the early Sasanian dynasty." In V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, eds., *The Sasanian Era*, 71–87. London.

Hauser, S. 2005. "Die ewigen Nomaden? Bemerkungen zu Herkunft, Militär, Staatsaufbau und nomadischen Traditionen der Arsakiden." In B. Meißner et al., eds., *Krieg, Gesellschaft, Institutionen*, 163–205. Berlin.

———. 2006. "Was there no paid standing army? A fresh look on military and political institutions in the Arsacid empire." In M. Mode, ed., *Arms and armour as indicators of cultural transfer: The steppes and the ancient world from Hellenistic times to the early Middle Ages*, 295–319. Wiesbaden.

Howard-Johnston, J. 1995. "The two great powers in late antiquity: A comparison." In A. Cameron, ed., *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, III: States, resources and armies*, 157–226. Princeton, NJ.

———. 2006. *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the end of antiquity: Historiographical and historical studies*. Aldershot, UK.

———. 2008. "State and society in late antique Iran." In V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, eds., *The Sasanian Era*, 118–131. London.

———. 2010. *Witnesses to a world crisis: Historians and histories of the Middle East in the seventh century*. Oxford.

Huyse, P. 1999. *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Kaba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ) (CII, pt. III, vol. 1, texts I)*. 2 vols. London.

———. 2005. *La Perse antique*. Paris.

- . 2006. "Die sasanidische Königstitulatur: eine Gegenüberstellung der Quellen." In J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, eds., *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt* (Stuttgart), 181–201.
- . In press. *Histoire orale et écrite en Iran ancien entre mémoire et oubli*.
- Invernizzi, A., ed. 2007. *Sulla via di Alessandro: Da Seleucia al Gandhāra*. Torino.
- Jullien, C., and F. Jullien. 2002. *Apôtres des confins: Processus missionnaires chrétiens dans l'Empire iranien*. Bures-sur-Yvette.
- Kalmin, R. 2006. *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine*. Oxford.
- Klinkott, H. 2005. *Der Satrap: Ein achaimenidischer Amtsträger und seine Handlungsspielräume*. Frankfurt.
- Kuhrt, A. 2001. "The Achaemenid Persian empire (c. 550–c. 330 **BCE**): Continuities, adaptations, transformations." In S. Alcock et al., eds., *Empires: Perspectives from archaeology and history*, 93–123. Cambridge.
- . 2007. *The Persian empire: A corpus of sources from the Achaemenid period*. 2 vols. London.
- Lecoq, P. 1997. *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide*. Paris.
- Lerouge, C. 2007. *L'image des Parthes dans le monde gréco-roman*. Stuttgart.
- (p. 230) Lieu, S. N. C. 1992. *Manichaeism in the Later Roman empire and medieval China*. 2nd ed. Tübingen.
- . 1999. *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman east*. 2nd ed. Leiden.
- Mustafa, A., J. Tubach, and G. S. Vashalomidze, eds. 2007. *Inkulturation des Christentums im Sasanidenreich*. Wiesbaden.
- Olbrycht, M. J. 1998. *Parthia et ultiores gentes: Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen dem arsakidischen Iran und den Nomaden der eurasischen Steppen*. Munich.
- . 2003. "Parthia and nomads of Central Asia: Elements of steppe origin in the social and military developments of Arsacid Iran." In I. Schneider, ed., *Militär und Staatlichkeit: Beiträge des Kolloquiums vom 29.–30.4.2002*, *Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte* 12, 69–109. Halle.
- Pourshariati, P. 2008. *Decline and fall of the Sasanian empire*. London.
- Root, M. C. 1979. *The king and kingship in Achaemenid art: Essays on the creation of an iconography of empire*. Leiden.

Iranian Empires

- Rubin, Z. 1995. "The reforms of Khusrō Anūshirwān." In A. Cameron, ed., *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East. Vol. 3, States, resources and armies*, 227–296. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2000. "The Sasanid monarchy." In A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. 14*. 2nd ed., 638–661. Cambridge.
- . 2004. "Nobility, monarchy and legitimation under the later Sasanians." In J. Haldon and L. I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East. Vol. 4, Elites old and new in the Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, 235–273. Princeton, NJ.
- Schippmann, K. 1980. *Grundzüge der parthischen Geschichte*. Darmstadt.
- . *Grundzüge der Geschichte des sasanidischen Reiches*. Darmstadt.
- Schneider, R. M., 2006. "Orientalism in late antiquity." In J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, eds., *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, 241–263. Stuttgart.
- . 2007. "Friend and foe: The Orient in Rome." In V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, eds., *The age of the Parthians*, 50–86. London.
- Sherwin-White, S., and A. Kuhrt. 1993. *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A new approach to the Seleucid empire*. London.
- Skjærvø, P. O. 2005. "The Achaemenids and the Avesta." In V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, eds., *Birth of the Persian empire*, 52–84. London.
- Stausberg, M. 2002. *Die Religion Zarathushtras*. Vol. 1. Stuttgart.
- Stolper, M. W. 1999. Une 'vision dure' de l'histoire achéménide (note critique). *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*: 1109–1126.
- Tuplin, C. 1987. "The administration of the Achaemenid empire." In I. Carradice, ed., *Coinage and administration in the Athenian and Persian empires*, 109–166. London.
- . 2004. "The Persian empire." In R. Lane Fox, ed., *The long march*, 154–183. Oxford.
- . 2008. "Herodotus on Persia and the Persian empire." In R. B. Strassler, ed., *The Landmark Herodotus*, 792–797. New York.
- . In press. *A history of the Persian empire*. Oxford.
- Weber, U. 2008. Prosopographie des frühen Sasanidenreiches (<http://www.uni-kiel.de/klassalt/projekte/sasaniden/index.html>).
- Whitby, M., 1994. "The Persian king at war." In E. Dabrowa, ed., *The Roman and Byzantine army in the east*, 227–263. Kraków.

(p. 231) Wiesehöfer, J. 1993. "Geteilte Loyalitäten: Religiöse Minderheiten des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts n.Chr. im Spannungsfeld zwischen Rom und dem sāsānidischen Iran." *Klio* 75: 362–382.

———. 1995. "'Reichsgesetz' oder 'Einzelfallgerechtigkeit': Bemerkungen zu P. Freis These von der achaimenidischen 'Reichsautorisation.'" *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 1: 36–46.

———. 1996a. "Discordia et defectio—dynamis kai pithanourgia: Die frühen Seleukiden und Iran." In B. Funck, ed., *Hellenismus: Beiträge zur Erforschung von Akkulturation und politischer Ordnung in den Staaten des hellenistischen Zeitalters*, 29–56. Tübingen.

———. 1996b. "'King of kings' and 'philhellên': Kingship in Arsacid Iran." In P. Bilde et al., eds., *Aspects of Hellenistic kingship*, 55–66. Aarhus.

———, ed. 1998. *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse—The Arsacid empire: Sources and documentation*. Stuttgart.

———. 2000. "Denn Orodes war der griechischen Sprache und Literatur nicht unkundig... 'Parther, Griechen und griechische Kultur.'" In R. Dittmann et al., eds., *Variatio delectat: Iran und der Westen. Gedenkschrift für P. Calmeyer*, 703–721. Altenberge.

———. 2004. *Ancient Persia*. 3rd ed. London.

———. 2005. *Iraniens, Grecs et Romains*. Paris.

———. 2006. "Statt einer Einleitung: 'Randkultur' oder 'Nabel der Welt'? Das Sasanidenreich und der Westen: Anmerkungen eines Althistorikers." In J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, eds., *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, 9–28. Stuttgart.

———. 2007a. "King, court, and royal representation in the Sasanian empire." In A. J. S. Spawforth, ed., *The court and court society in ancient monarchies*, 58–81. Cambridge.

———. 2007b. "Ein König erschließt und imaginiert sein Imperium: persische Reichsordnung und persische Reichsbilder zur Zeit Dareios I. (522–486 v.Chr.)." In M. Rathmann, ed., *Wahrnehmung und Erfassung geographischer Räume in der Antike*, 31–40. Mainz.

———. 2008. "Gerechtigkeit und Recht im achaimenidischen Iran." In H. Barta, R. Rollinger, and M. Lang, eds., *Recht und Religion: menschliche und göttliche*

———. 2009a. *Das frühe Persien*. 4th ed. Munich.

———, J. 2009b. "The Achaemenid empire." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires: State power from Assyria to Byzantium*, 66–98. New York.

Iranian Empires

———. 2009c. “Kawad, Khusro I and the Mazdakites: A new proposal.” In P. Gignoux, C. Jullien, and F. Jullien, eds., *Trésors d’Orient: Mélanges offerts à R. Gyselen*. Leuven.

———. 2010. “The late Sasanian Near East.” In C. Robinson, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam*. Vol. 1, 98–152. Cambridge.

Wiesehöfer, J., and Huyse, P., eds. 2006. *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*. Stuttgart.

Wolski, J. 1993. *L’empire des Arsacides*. Leuven.

Yarshater, E., 1983. “Iranian national history.” In E. Yarshater, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Vol. 3.1, 359–477. Cambridge. (p. 232)

Josef Wiesehöfer

Josef Wiesehöfer is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Kiel. His main interests are the history of the ancient Near East and its relations with the Mediterranean world, social history, the history of early modern travelogues, and the history of scholarship.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Bronze Age Greece

John Bennet

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Greek History, Social and Economic History, Greek and
Roman Law

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0009

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of state formation in ancient Greece during the Bronze Age, providing an overview of the nature of the Minoan states and the extent of control exercised by Mycenaean states. It describes the key features of the states in the Mycenaean period, which include state structure and organization, palatial centers, military organization, economic organization and administration, and systems of communication and representation.

Keywords: state formation, ancient Greece, Bronze Age, Minoan states, Mycenaean states, state structure, state organization, military organization, economic organization, economic administration

Introduction

There are two episodes of state formation in the prehistoric Aegean, one at the beginning, the other in the middle of the second millennium BCE. The first states are associated with the appearance of complex structures conventionally called “palaces” on the island of Crete shortly after 2000 BCE (the MMIB phase); the second with the emergence of distinctive “palaces” of different form on the Greek mainland around the middle of the second millennium. Neither appearance was “pristine” and this means that the region is of considerable interest as a case study in first-generation (i.e., the first states to appear in a region) and secondary (i.e., states forming on the basis of interaction with preexisting polities) state formation (cf. Parkinson and Galaty 2007). The Cretan, or Minoan, states thus appeared on the periphery of the existing polities of the Levant and North Africa, while the mainland, or Mycenaean, states were intimately implicated with their Minoan predecessors. This fact may lie behind a common thread in elite self-representation throughout the period: familiarity with exotic materials and knowledge. Toward the end of the millennium, after 1200 BCE, states disappear in the Aegean for perhaps four to five hundred years. The polis or “city-state” that emerges then is quite different in form, number, and scale (see chapter 9).

This overview simplifies over a century of interpretation and current debates in the field, particularly about the nature of the Minoan states (especially in their earlier phases) and also about the extent of control exercised by Mycenaean states. Early interpretations were advanced prior to the decipherment of contemporary written documents. So, for Heinrich Schliemann in the late nineteenth century, seeking a material reality for the Homeric texts, Mycenae, Tiryns, and other sites (p. 236) were the centers of heroic kings like Agamemnon. Sir Arthur Evans, whose excavations at Knossos began in 1900, drew on nineteenth-century British prehistory and contemporary anthropology, and he regarded that site (and the other palaces) as centers of rule by “priest-kings” who drew on supernatural authority.

Evans was drawn to Crete by the existence of writing systems there that he analyzed as three successive scripts: Cretan hieroglyphic, Linear A, and Linear B. For him, Minoan Crete was not only the first literate civilization in Europe but also dominated the Aegean islands and Greek mainland throughout the second millennium BCE. Although archaeologists including A. J. B. Wace and C. W. Blegen questioned this view prior to World War II and Evans’s death in 1941, particularly for the Late Bronze Age, it was the decipherment of Linear B by Michael Ventris in 1952 that sparked a radical reappraisal of how Aegean (particularly Mycenaean) states functioned. Moses Finley utterly rejected Homer as a heuristic model in favor of parallels with the (broadly) redistributive states of Mesopotamia (Finley 1957). The Linear B evidence, from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE, shaped interpretations of earlier stages of statehood on Crete because the

other scripts remained (and still remain) undeciphered, and were thus unable to offer direct insight into their operation.

Renfrew's major study *The emergence of civilisation*, published in 1972, combined Finley's reinterpretation with general archaeological discussions about the origins and operation of early states. His model was essentially managerial: Minoan (and subsequently Mycenaean) states emerged as mechanisms to even out ecological diversity over modest territories, drawing on the "Mediterranean triad" of grain, olives, and the vine to support increasing population as well as on the creation of wealth primarily through metals (Renfrew 1972; cf. Barrett and Halstead 2004). Renfrew went on to highlight the small scale of these "early state modules" and to coin the term "peer-polity interaction" for the mechanism by which they rapidly took on similar features from one another (Renfrew and Cherry 1986).

Recent studies have moved away from generalization to emphasize difference, not only between the mainland and Minoan states but also between the earliest states on Crete and their later manifestations. The very nature of the earliest palatial complexes on Crete and their significance as indicators of development have been questioned, both in terms of their coherence as a group in space and time and as reflecting single (hierarchical), rather than multiple (heterarchical), authorities (summarized in Parkinson and Galaty 2007). For the mainland, some have sought to downplay the sophistication of states (e.g. Sherratt 2001, who characterized them as "Potemkin palaces"), while others (Halstead 2007; Galaty, Nakassis, and Parkinson 2011) have deemphasized their "redistributive" role and suggested that large areas of activity lay outside state control, the palaces choosing to "mobilize" only those resources—human and material—useful to their goal of production for exchange.

What these current debates rightly stress is that there was no single template for Aegean Bronze Age states over the millennium of their existence. Nevertheless, if we take a general definition of the state, such as that offered by Baines and Yoffee (1998, 254), as "the central, governing institution and social form in a differentiated, stratified society in which rank and status are only partly determined through kinship," and couple that with Yoffee's hyperconcise definition of the state as "a central authority, whose leaders have privileged access to wealth and to the gods" (Yoffee 2005, 17), then we can agree that polities of this type certainly existed by the fourteenth century BCE on mainland Greece and Crete and very likely emerged around 1900 BCE on Crete. Evidence for the detailed operation of this range of polities is, however, not evenly distributed across the period: although writing existed probably even prior to the emergence of states on Crete, and was in continuous use until near the end of the second millennium BCE, only in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries can the deciphered Linear B documents be set alongside archaeological data (Map 8.1).

Minoan States on Crete (ca. 2000-1500 BCE)

Minoan states have a 500-year history, conventionally divided into three major phases: the first, old, or Protopalatial (ca. 1900-1700 BCE, ceramic phases MMIB-MMIIIA), when the first palaces were constructed and in operation; the Second, New, or Neopalatial (ca. 1700-1450 BCE, ceramic phases MMIIIB-LMIB), when major palaces were elaborated and new palace-like structures built; and the Third, or Final-Palatial (ca. 1450-1350 BCE, ceramic phases LMII-LMIIIA2), when Knossos alone appears to have functioned as the center of a state (overviews in Shelmerdine 2008b; Cline 2010).

We are dependent on archaeological data to understand the rise of states on Crete from the end of the third millennium. The timing of their development probably has much to do with the appearance of sailing vessels that effectively collapsed the distance between Crete and the eastern Mediterranean, which facilitated the movement of materials and people around the region, signaled by the exponential increase in imported exotic objects and materials in the century on either side of 2000 BCE (Broodbank 2000, 341-349). However, we should emphasize that this change represented an active response to increased interaction. Writing is a case in point, since the earliest Minoan writing is neither cuneiform, nor Egyptian, in either form or structure, yet much administrative recording was done on clay, as in the cuneiform world (cf. Schoep 2006, 54).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 8.1 Bronze Age Greece.

The combined weight of scholarly tradition, from Evans through Finley to Renfrew, together with the picture created by the fourteenth- to thirteenth-century BCE Linear B documents extrapolated back to the Minoan palaces of the nineteenth to fifteenth centuries BCE, lead us to see the

construction around 1900 BCE of monumental building complexes called “palaces” at Knossos, Phaistos, and Malia as signaling the appearance of centralized states. These complexes, centered on large courts, with open, paved areas on their west sides and large storage areas, fulfilled (p. 238) (p. 239) the functions of political, ritual, and economic centers (reinforced by the existence of written documents), storing agricultural surplus for redistribution, and manufacturing and consuming elite goods. They were also aligned on visible ritual sites nearby, particularly the peak sanctuary on Mt. Iouktas south of Knossos, and the Kamares cave north of Phaistos. Their origins were in sites that were already centers of population in the mid-third millennium (the Early Minoan II ceramic phase), which also had significant agricultural hinterlands (Whitelaw 2004b).

Bronze Age Greece

Although the “palaces” marked the centers of these polities, we should remember that the term is primarily architectural, defining a particular form of central building. Many of the social changes that we associate with such structures were probably already underway at these (and some other) major sites in the mid-third millennium BCE, as is suggested by ceramic evidence for large-scale consumption events (Day and Wilson 2002).

In the past decade, reexamination of the earliest phases of major Minoan “palace” sites, plus new discoveries, including other “palaces” have complicated this picture (Schoep 2010; Tomkins and Schoep 2010). First, the term “palace” has come under scrutiny, given the greater number of structures now known to which the term could apply; some would replace it with the less value-laden term “court-centered building.” Second, 1900 BCE is no longer a critical watershed; there were court-centered structures prior to this at least at Malia and Phaistos. Third, the three major palaces at Knossos, Malia, and Phaistos show variation in their physical forms and social practices in their earliest stages. Finally, many features of the later, Neopalatial palaces were not present within the central buildings themselves in the Protopalatial period but appeared in surrounding structures, suggesting that the central structures might have formed arenas for communal display and celebration, used by a number of elite groups resident around them. A factor in the development of these first palatial centers may have been their considerable history, particularly at Knossos, occupied for five millennia before the palace was built (cf. Day and Wilson 2002).

Authority, then, may have been situated in surrounding buildings, and it may have been multiple, rather than singular. For some, this suggests a factional situation, a “heterarchy,” rather than a hierarchy focused on a single authority. Parkinson and Galaty (2007) prefer the term “corporate,” drawing on a different theoretical tradition. On either model similar practices are attributed to elites in establishing power: the acquisition and display of exotic materials and knowledge, specialized manufacture, sponsorship of large-scale consumption events, use of writing—it is the location and plurality of the actors that is new. By the Neopalatial period it is likely that single authorities had established control in central structures at Knossos, Phaistos, Malia, and other sites, not necessarily containing court-centered buildings.

State Structure and Organization

Whatever the particular form of polities that emerged early in the second millennium BCE—hierarchical or heterarchical—they had an impact at a regional level and commanded respect and cooperation from those who lived within their (p. 240) regions, regions that were possibly multiple, depending on the areas of activity to which they pertained—political, economic, ideological—which were probably not coterminous, at least in the Protopalatial period (Knappett 1999). Polities may have become more classically hierarchical as the second millennium progressed, but we have little idea of specific political structures in the absence of deciphered texts or unambiguous representational

Bronze Age Greece

evidence. Minoan Crete, unlike contemporary Egypt, offers no obvious representations of rulers, lending support to the notion that authority was somehow corporate, rather than individual. However, the absence of a developed ruler iconography is not necessarily evidence for the absence of a single authority (cf. Trigger 2003, 73). Some indication of the major palaces' regional significance is the fact that their form was emulated in certain places and at certain times after their initial appearance. An obvious example is the palace in microcosm constructed at Kato Zakros on the far eastern coast at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age; others include the palace at Galatas, only 20 kilometers southeast of Knossos itself, which for a short period in the LMIA (see table 8.1) represented either an attempt by Knossos to stamp its authority on the region, or a claim by the elite at Galatas that they enjoyed authority similar to that of the older palatial sites.

A much debated topic is whether Knossos constituted a superstate controlling the entire island of Crete. This appears unlikely in the Protopalatial period for the reasons discussed above, as well as the fact that it used Cretan hieroglyphic, one of (p. 241) the two different writing systems that were in contemporary use at the time, the other being Linear A. Knossian dominance is conceivable in the MMIIIB-LMIA periods, when it was by some margin the largest urban center, its palace recently elaborated, and Linear A had become the only writing system in use throughout the island, although even then it may only have acted as *primus inter pares*. The eruption of Thera toward the end of the LMIA ceramic phase (whatever its absolute date: Manning 2010) may have so disrupted Crete, not least ideologically, that there was a "fragmentation" of authority in the following, LMIB, phase (Driessen and MacDonald 1997).

Bronze Age Greece

Table 8.1 Outline Chronology of Second-Millennium BCE Crete and Mainland Greece, Showing Cultural and Ceramic Phases and Approximate Absolute Dates

Crete		Mainland Greece		
Cultural Phase	Ceramic Phase	Approx. Years (BCE)	Ceramic Phase	Cultural Phase
Protopalatial/"Old Palace"	Middle Minoan (MM) IB-II	1900-1700	Middle Helladic (MH)	Prepalatial
Neopalatial/"New Palace"	MMIIIA-B-Late Minoan (LM) IA	1700-1500	Late Helladic (LH) I	"Shaft Grave" Period/"Early Mycenaean"
	LMIB	1500-1450	LHIIA	
Final-Palatial	LMII	1450-1400	LHIIIB	Early Palatial/"Mycenaean"
	LMIIIA1	1400-1350	LHIIIA1	
Postpalatial	LMIIIA2	1350-1300	LHIIIA2	Mature Palatial/"Mycenaean"
	LMIIIB	1300-1200	LHIIIB	
	LMIHIC	1200-1100	LHIIIC	Postpalatial

It should not surprise us to see a shift in the practice of statehood over this long period. In the Protopalatial period the emphasis appears to have been on palaces as communal display centers (especially Knossos, Phaistos, and Malia), while by the LMI period these features were no longer required, and a site like Ayia Triada, its urban form unlike that of the early palaces, could take on the role of administrative center. We might be in a better position if we could understand the content of the Linear A documents that are attested throughout Crete, and by the Neopalatial period on many of the islands (Keos, Melos, and Thera; Karnava 2008), their broad distribution suggesting that administration was going on in many places, but possibly at a number of levels and spatial scales (Schoep 2002).

Size and Shape of Minoan States

We do not know how many Minoan states existed over their 500-year history. A minimal interpretation would suggest that central Crete was “shared” between three: Knossos (in the north), Malia (to its east), and Phaistos (in the south), each with territories of approximately 1,000 square kilometers (Bennet 1990). East Crete seems to have had more, and more varied, centers. The site of Petras on the Bay of Siteia, founded in MMIIA, was “palatial” in form, with a tiny central court, and a Cretan hieroglyphic archive, but its area of control is unclear since there were other sizable settlements, such as Palaikastro and Kato Zakros further east, and Pseira, Mochlos, and Gournia to its west on the north coast. None of these originated as palaces, although Kato Zakros was remodeled as such in the late Neopalatial period. In the west, there was almost certainly a major center—we do not know if its layout was court centered—under the modern city of Chania, and possibly another on the north coast east of modern Rethymnon.

The palatial centers were urban: Knossos probably exceeded 75 hectares at its Neopalatial peak, with at least 18,000 inhabitants, the largest known prehistoric city in the Aegean; Malia perhaps 37 hectares, both larger than Ugarit or Alalakh (Bennet 2007a, 184). How their territories were organized is unclear, but they contained substantial settlements in addition to the palatial centers plus, in the Neopalatial period, a series of specialized rural sites conventionally called “villas” (Hägg 1997). Peak and cave sanctuaries were widely distributed, although (p. 242) the number of peak sanctuaries in use declined in the Neopalatial period. Certain sanctuaries may have taken on regional significance: Iouktas, a peak sanctuary, and the Idaian and Psychro (Diktaian) caves. The palace centers themselves were not stable throughout. Phaistos, for example, after destruction by earthquake at the end of the Middle Minoan II (MMII) period, was not fully rebuilt in a monumental, court-centered form until late in the Neopalatial phase. Its administrative authority was apparently transferred to the elaborate “villa” site of Ayia Triada, a few kilometers distant on the west end of the same ridge. That Ayia Triada retained some form of regional authority even when the LMIB palace at Phaistos had been rebuilt is clear from the Linear A archive found there.

Bronze Age Greece

Finally, the presence of Minoan materials, including written documents and sealings, in the wider Aegean from Kythera in the west, the Cyclades, even Samothrace in the northern Aegean, to the Dodecanese and the southwestern coast of Turkey at Miletos, demonstrates involvement by the various Cretan states in the Aegean, a process termed “Minoanization” (Broodbank 2004). The nature of this involvement has been much debated—colonization, political control, or economic exploitation—but it was a process by which the fledgling polities of the mainland encountered Minoan materials and knowledge, probably mediated through island settlements like Kastri on Kythera (and nearby Pavlopetri and Ayios Stephanos on the southern mainland) and Kolonna on Aigina.

Convergence or Collision: Fifteenth-Century BCE Crete and the Mycenaean Mainland

The origins of Mycenaean administration and, with it, aspects of the practice of “statehood” clearly lie on Minoan Crete. We can only access the earliest stages of Mycenaean states through archaeology. The Shaft Grave period on the mainland (end of the Middle Helladic to early Late Helladic II, ca. 1750–1500 BCE) is when clear signs of social competition and ranking emerged. Competition was carried out through mortuary display in elaborate tombs—shaft graves in the Argolid, especially Mycenae, and tholos tombs in Messenia—often involving the deposition of large numbers of objects of exotic origin, from Crete, from the wider eastern Mediterranean, and, significantly, from temperate Europe, probably acquired in the central Mediterranean (Graziadio 1998). This period signals the emergence of small-scale polities, not states, but often characterized as “chiefdoms,” following the standard social-evolutionary terminology, that would go on to form the major Mycenaean states (Wright 2008). In the case of the Pylos region in the southwest Peloponnese, for example, several centers may have emerged as potential competitors in the period of the Mycenae Shaft Graves. By the late fifteenth century BCE (p. 243) (the LHIIB ceramic phase), however, Pylos had achieved regional prominence, “demoting” local competitors as it grew (e.g., Bennet 2008c). Centers like Pylos and Tiryns also preserve some indications of monumental architecture by this date (Wright 2006, 14, 18). This may have marked the first institutionalization of state government, as investment in display shifted from the inherently malleable mortuary sphere to more stable, and visible, architectural elaboration of the palatial complexes.

On Crete, widespread burnt destructions at many sites mark the end of the Neopalatial period (LMIB). This period immediately follows the latest Mycenae Shaft Grave period, and many regard these destructions on Crete as evidence for a mainland conquest of the island, ushering in the Final-Palatial period when the Linear B script, recording an early form of Greek, came into use (e.g., Driessen 2000, 219–220). If correctly dated around 1400 BCE, the Room of the Chariot Tablets Linear B deposit at Knossos would be roughly contemporary with the earliest plausible regional-scale polities on the mainland. While a Mycenaean takeover cannot be ruled out, a more nuanced reconstruction would see the Knossos elite taking an opportunity to extend its control over much of the island. The Greek language, no doubt familiar from frequent interaction between Knossos and mainland Greek polities over at least a century, was adopted as a mark of distinction, part of an administrative reform (Driessen and Langohr 2007; Bennet 2008b). The synchronization of changes at Knossos with the appearance of the first states on the mainland raises the possibility that the supposed Mycenaean invasion of Crete was in fact part of a larger phenomenon of establishment of small states over the southern mainland and Crete.

States in the Mycenaean Period (ca. 1400-1200 BCE)

We do not know how many states existed by the mature Mycenaean period (ca. 1400–1200 BCE). We can assume that those sites that had either recognizably “palatial” building complexes and/or Linear B administrative documents formed the centers of such states. Palatial complexes had at their core the characteristic *megaron* form: a large room with a central hearth, encircled by columns (usually four), entered from an anteroom and porch from one of its short sides (see Wright 2006 on its development). Some centers had more than one *megaron* (Tiryns, Pylos); some, but not all, were fortified, notably those in the Argolid (Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea). While still small, Mycenaean states were generally larger than the earlier Minoan states, their territories perhaps extending over two to four thousand square kilometers, their boundaries rarely more than one day’s travel in any direction from the center, and their populations perhaps in the tens rather than hundreds (p. 244) of thousands. Although it is tempting to call them city-states, the presence of quite significant settlements in addition to the urban centers suggests otherwise; indeed, they may have been composite polities, made up by the incorporation of previously independent, small-scale units (e.g., Bennet 2008c).

Linear B documents are so far only attested in major centers, so their presence acts as an archaeological indicator of central status. There are around 5,500 Linear B documents in total, attested at nine sites: Knossos and Chania on Crete; and, on the mainland, Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns, Midea, and Thebes, with recent discoveries at Ayios Vasileios in Lakonia and Volos/Dimini in southern Thessaly. (The largest collections are from Knossos [ca. 4000] and Pylos [ca. 1000], followed by Thebes [close to 400].) A minimal list of state centers would therefore include these sites and, in addition, Athens, Orchomenos, and possibly sites on the islands, especially larger ones like Rhodes. Of the known states, Pylos is the best documented by virtue of its Linear B archive, the relatively high-quality excavation of its central buildings, and the fact that its probable territory has twice been the object of regional archaeological surveys (McDonald and Rapp 1972; Davis 2008). We can therefore say more about it than about other Mycenaean states, and it forms the basis for much of what follows. However, we should bear in mind that the Linear B evidence from Pylos belongs *at the very end of* the thirteenth century BCE. The picture it paints may therefore look very different from that at mid-fourteenth-century BCE Knossos, or even at Mycenae, one or two generations earlier.

The Size and Shape of Mycenaean States

The mid-fourteenth-century BCE Linear B documents uncovered at Knossos suggest that it oversaw a territory of 4,500 to 5,000 square kilometers (50%–60% of Crete) extending from the Chania region in the far west to the Lasithi region of east-central Crete, including the south-central part of the island around Phaistos. Eastern Crete beyond Lasithi seems not to have been part of this polity (Bennet 1985, 243). Although smaller than it had been in the Neopalatial period, Knossos may still have been a city of around 40 hectares in this period (Whitelaw 2004a, 156). The earlier documents from the Room of the Chariot Tablets suggest a stage when Knossos's power did not extend quite so far east and may have been discontinuous (Driessen 2001). This state seems to have collapsed in the mid-fourteenth century BCE, perhaps because it overextended its control on an island inherently difficult to manage from a single center (cf. Bennet 1990). The mid-thirteenth-century BCE Linear B archive at Chania probably marked the center of a “successor” state, one of a number focused on sites like Ayia Triada in south-central Crete, and a reduced Knossos itself.

At its peak in the thirteenth century BCE, the urban center of Pylos was around 15 hectares in extent, with a population of perhaps 3,000 (Bennet 2007a, 187), and it exercised some form of control over about 2,000 square kilometers, much of the (p. 245) modern prefecture of Messenia, bounded by the mountains of Arcadia to the north and the Taygetos range to the east. The total population of the polity may have been 50,000 (Bennet 2007a, 187–188). Within this area, the texts make a distinction between a Hither and Further Province, marked by a feature known to Strabo (8.4.1–2) as Aigaleon—a ridge that runs northwest to southeast, separating off the Pamisos valley from the western coastal lowlands. Within each of these provinces, the texts list a series of settlements—nine in the Hither and seven or eight in the Further Province, those in the Hither Province appearing on three fixed-order lists. These place-names probably defined local centers within the overall administrative structure and it is likely that they were sites incorporated into the Pylian polity as it expanded within the region (Bennet 2008c).

Our ability to understand the extent of other Mycenaean state territories is limited. In the Argolid Mycenae and Tiryns were major fortified settlements within a few kilometers of one another, while other sites in the region are also fortified and, in the case of Midea, show evidence of Linear B in the form of sealings. It seems unlikely that two separate states—Mycenae and Tiryns—were in existence simultaneously, so we assume that Mycenae was the dominant center. There is some archaeological evidence that Mycenae incorporated parts of the Corinthia in the early Late Bronze Age (Cherry and Davis 2001; cf. Pullen and Tartaron 2007). If Mycenae controlled all the modern prefectures of Argolid and Corinthia, then its territory would have exceeded 4,000 square kilometers, close to that of Knossos. Mycenae itself, it has been estimated, was a city of 32 hectares, with a population of around 6,400 (Bennet 2007a, 187).

Bronze Age Greece

Boeotia appears also to have contained two centers—Thebes and Orchomenos. Place-name evidence from the Theban Linear B archive suggests that Thebes's territory extended south and east, apparently including the island of Euboea, itself 3,600 square kilometers (Del Frio 2009). Thebes itself was a large center, perhaps 28 hectares (Bennet 2007a, 187), distinctive in its eastern imports, and prominent in later Greek tradition. Orchomenos, we assume, controlled northern Boeotia, probably including the Kopaïs Basin, drained by a massive public works operation in the Late Bronze Age, with fortified storerooms at Glas (Hope Simpson and Hagel 2006, 185–209).

We can only suggest the territory of Mycenaean Athens in the absence of texts from the Mycenaean palace under the later temples on the Akropolis: presumably it extended, as in classical times, to the low mountains separating Attika and Boeotia to the north, and possibly as far as the Corinth Isthmus to the west and south, approaching 3,000 square kilometers. The recent discovery of four or five Linear B documents (Del Frio 2012, 17–18) at Ayios Vasileios appears to mark this site as a palatial center in Lakonia, distinct from the Menelaion site further north, prominent in earlier phases. If Ayios Vasileios turns out to be a center similar to Pylos, then its territory may have covered much of Lakonia, just over 3,500 square kilometers.

The northern boundary of this Mycenaean palatial world was probably Thessaly, perhaps western Thessaly, where the characteristic Mycenaean elite (p. 246) tomb type, the tholos, is attested, but where there are no obvious urban centers, and more certainly the region around the Pagasitic Gulf. Here, a settlement adjacent to the Neolithic tell site of Dimini with two megara looks like a Mycenaean palace site, albeit a provincial variant, and has provided two Linear B inscriptions, neither of them administrative. The recent rediscovery of two fragmentary Linear B tablets (one with no preserved writing: Del Frio 2012, 21) in Volos (often identified with ancient Iolkos) only 4 kilometers distant, suggests either multiple palatial centers or a hierarchy of sites within a southern Thessalian state (Adrimi-Sismani 2007).

There are also gaps in the picture: neither the northwest Peloponnese, nor Phokis, between Boeotia and southern Thessaly, seems to contain a true Mycenaean palatial center.

State Structure and Organization

The decipherment of Linear B opened up the administrative documents belonging to the Mycenaean world to scholarship, enhancing our understanding of the structure and organization of Mycenaean states (see Palaima 2003 for an overview). The majority of these texts are inscribed on clay, but there is also a group of around 170 texts painted before firing on transport-storage vessels (stirrup jars), mostly manufactured on Crete, and attested there and at most mainland centers. Clay documents were not deliberately baked, but preserved by accidental burning, nor were they deliberately archived, so the documents we have reflect only the situation current at the time they were preserved.

They are also primarily economic documents, with a center-biased perspective, and they take for granted the political structure, giving us no clear idea of the overall “portfolios” of the various actors within the state. We are therefore dependent on allusion or context, and sometimes etymology, based on later Greek texts.

Mycenaean states were monarchies, with at their head a “king,” *wanax* (Linear B *wa-na-ka*), attested at Pylos, Knossos, Thebes, and possibly Chania. The *wanax* is distinguished in the text by appointing officials, by having banquets held in his honor, and by the size of his landholdings in comparison with lesser officials. Produce and products could be labeled “royal,” *wanaktero-* (for example, cloth at Knossos, and probably oil in transport stirrup jars) and the term is also applied to some “dedicated” or “attached” craftspeople (a potter, an armorer, and a fuller), who appear on land tenure documents, presumably enjoying use of the land through royal association. It is possible that the *wanax* also appears in the Pylos texts by name (Linear B *e-ke-ra₂-wo*, perhaps *Ekhelawon*), although scholars are divided on this point (Shelmerdine 2008a, 129). If so, then we have evidence of the king acting both as head of state and as a member of the elite under his own name.

A similar, less prominent, profile attaches to the *lawagetas* (Linear B *ra-wa-ke-ta*), probably “leader of the *la(w)os*,” attested at Pylos and Knossos. His role has (p. 247) often been interpreted as military, if *la(w)os* meant “host” in a military sense in the Mycenaean period, an etymological interpretation that has been contested. There is little else to go on in interpreting his role. He held one-third as much land as the king (on one Pylos document) and had at least one “dedicated” craftsman (a chariot fitter) again listed as holding land. The binary distinction between the *wanax* and *lawagetas*—reflected in the opposed adjectives *wanakteros* versus *lawagesios*—has led to the suggestion that the two offices were complementary, the *lawagetas* holding military responsibility. Some have identified the second *megaron* that appears at Pylos and Tiryns as his domain. At Pylos the *lawagetas* may also act in his own name, *we-da-ne-u*, a major figure, possibly a priest of Poseidon and one of the Pylos “collectors” (Shelmerdine 2008a, 130).

We-da-ne-u may also have been one of the *hek^wetai* (Linear B *e-qe-ta*), perhaps “followers (of the king),” attested at Pylos and Knossos, again reflecting the overlap between “official” and “individual” authority. At Pylos, the *hek^wetai* appear not only with their names but also with a patronymic, suggesting their aristocratic origins, and they oversaw groups of military personnel. Cloth (at Knossos) and chariot wheels (at Pylos) are described as “for the *hek^wetai*” (Linear B *e-qe-si-jo/ja*). Another possible role as individuals may have been among the “collectors,” a modern term for individuals, possibly members of the royal family, who were assigned the benefit from (or who owned) certain areas of production, such as stock rearing (at Pylos) or textile and oil production (at Knossos). Four can be identified at Pylos, over twenty at Knossos, where they may have played a more significant role in the outlying districts of the polity (Shelmerdine 2008a, 132). Parallel to the “collectors” is a religious “sector”: certain animals and craftspeople are described as “relating to Potnia” (Linear B *po-ti-ni-ja-we-jo*), implying presumably that the goddess’s establishments and priestly personnel enjoyed the benefit

from their production (cf. Bendall 2007; Lupack 2008). The fact that both “collector” and “religious” production was recorded centrally strongly suggests that both were under the ultimate control of the central state authority.

These figures seem to be centrally based, but they also acted across the polity. Other titles attested at Pylos and elsewhere related to provincial or local administration. The sixteen or seventeen districts of the Pylos polity seem to have been termed *damoi* (Linear B *da-mo*, later Greek “community”). One important role they played was to lease land; indeed, it is possible that all land in the polity was under the control of the *damos* (Killen 2008a, 162–171). *Damos* forms the first element of the title *da-mo-ko-ro*, probably “governor” of each of the two provinces. The second element of this term may form the root of the titles *ko-re-te* and *po-ro-ko-re-te*, often translated as “mayor” and “vice-mayor,” officials within each district and responsible to the central authority (Shelmerdine 2008a, 133–134; see García Ramón 2010, 69–87, on the etymology of the terms).

The later Greek word “king,” *basileus*, appears in the documents (Linear B *qa-si-re-u*), attested at both Pylos and Knossos, but, as far as we can tell, it denoted multiple figures—unlike the singular *wanax*—forming part of the power structure at the local, rather than palatial level (Shelmerdine 2008a, 135).

(p. 248) Economic Organization and Administration

A bureaucracy existed to manage economic activity within the Mycenaean state, using a sealing system to track individual commodities, information then transferred onto clay documents that were collected in “archives” before a possible final stage on perishable materials. Although no scribe is explicitly named on the Linear B documents, nor is the term itself plausibly identified, analysis of handwriting and tablet-formatting styles has identified “scribal hands,” particularly effectively at Knossos and Pylos where sample sizes are larger. Thirty-two scribes have been identified at Pylos, sixty-six in the Knossos main archive, and thirteen in the Room of the Chariot Tablets deposit. That these figures were administrators, not “secretaries,” is suggested by the fact that some specialized in particular areas of activity, such as a Knossos scribe who not only recorded wool and textile production targets but also censuses of the workforce and the rations they required in relation to the textile industry (Palaima 2003; cf. Bennet 2001).

These figures administered palatial activities that ultimately involved the management of people and commodities. Recent reappraisals have demonstrated how selective state involvement in the overall economy was (e.g., Bennet 2007a, 195–196; cf. Galaty, Nakassis, and Parkinson 2011). Rather than operating a total redistributive enterprise, as Finley (1957) proposed, it appears that states primarily mobilized the human and material resources they required to produce commodities for local display and distribution, in support of their status, and for exchange on the eastern Mediterranean

circuit, where a common value regime existed in the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE (Feldman 2006), of which the Mycenaean elite felt a part.

Where it was advantageous or where control was helped by monopoly of supply, states took over certain industries. Raw materials were acquired internally through regular, recurrent obligations and transformed through the input of ration-supported labor and technology into value-added products. The textile industry on Crete, along with some others (bronze; chariot wheels), was organized on the *ta-ra-si-ja* principle, under which weighed quantities of materials were given out to craft workers, who then returned a finished product of equal weight (cf. Killen 2008a, 194; the system is strikingly similar to the Mesopotamian *iškāru* system: Postgate 2010). Other crafts, on the other hand, especially those less susceptible to monitoring in this way (e.g., perfumed oil), or involving high-value imported materials over which the state probably exercised a monopoly of supply (e.g., gold, glass, ivory), were maintained within the palace (cf. Bennet 2007a, 200; 2008a). In other areas, such as ceramics, states could simply commission products, which they appear to have done in large quantities (e.g., Whitelaw 2001), either from “attached” specialists, like the “royal” potter mentioned above, or on the market. Largely invisible in our records, because they happened irregularly, are payments (*o-no*) made for raw materials and services (Halstead 2007, 69).

That there was an ideological element to palatial modes of acquisition is demonstrated by a series of texts—one per district—from Pylos (Ma tablets), that document an obligation on each district to deliver quantities of a group of six (p. 249) commodities in a fixed ratio assessed across the entire polity, then adjusted to favor the Hither over the Further Province (Shelmerdine 1973; Killen 1984). Although we can be confident of only two of the commodities (animal hides and tunics; see Killen 2008b, for the likelihood that all related to military manufacture), the fact that they are demanded from each district implies that they are widely available, rather than ecologically sensitive. It is the state’s right to exercise its claim in each part of the polity that is central here, rather than acquisition of the materials, as well as the fact that it is delivered at a district level, presumably through the *ko-re-te* and *po-ro-ko-re-te* mentioned above.

The destination for finished products is suggested by terms applied to some Knossian textiles: *e-qe-si-ja*, “for the *hek^wetai*,” that is, for internal distribution, and *ke-se-nu-wi-ja*, “for *xenwoi*, strangers,” presumably “for export,” one of a very few references to external exchange in our documents (cf. Killen 2008a, 181–189). The virtual absence of such references means that we have little textual evidence for how exchange was managed within Mycenaean states, or by whom: it may have been recorded on a perishable medium, or possibly handled only in face-to-face interactions. Archaeological evidence for the movement of commodities and products is abundant, however. Although textiles are not preserved archaeologically, the distribution across much of the Levantine coast of small stirrup jars of Mycenaean manufacture emphasizes the importance of perfumed oil manufacture attested in the Pylos and Knossos documents (e.g., Foster 1977; Shelmerdine 1985).

Military Organization

The ability to deploy military force was important in Mycenaean states. The expansion of Pylos from a relatively small center in western Messenia to a regional power no doubt involved coercion, and may well have been commemorated in both image and song within the latest palace structures (Davis and Bennet 1999). However, unless we accept the *lawagetas* as the Mycenaean “commander in chief,” we understand little of the structure of military power in Mycenaean states. At Pylos, a set of five documents lists ten groups (Linear B *o-ka*, probably *orkhai*) of between 10 and 110 men who are apparently “watching the coast.” Almost 800 men are involved, each under the command of a named individual, together with eleven *hek^wetai*. These documents have been cited as evidence of a state of emergency at Pylos, but, as Killen (2008a, 170) has pointed out, there are parallels between *o-ka* tablet personnel and flax records, suggesting that their deployment was a regular corvée arrangement. A group of several hundred “rowers” (*e-re-ta*) at Pylos may have been conscripted on a similar basis, with elite sponsorship in addition (Shelmerdine 2008a, 147).

There is therefore no clear evidence for the maintenance of a standing army, but Mycenaean military force seems to have involved chariots and armored men, in whose management the state took a role. Chariots are represented in texts at (p. 250) Knossos, Pylos, Chania, and Tiryns, but mostly in storage or production contexts, not deployment (Driessen 1996). At Pylos the number exceeds 100, while texts at Knossos list over 300 in one deposit, as well as a group of over 30 elaborately equipped and decorated chariots in store at Knossos and at three other second-order sites: Chania (Kydonia), Phaistos, and *se-to-i-ja* (Bennet 1985, 243). Most suggestive, however, is a group of documents from the Room of the Chariot Tablets deposit, which appear to record the apportioning of chariots, armor, and horses to named individuals. Driessen (1996, 491–492) estimates that the documents imply a total force of 250 chariots, and links this state of affairs to a Mycenaean conquest (Driessen 2000, 219–220). Knossos, Pylos, and now Ayios Vasileios in Lakonia contain records of other military equipment: body armor and weapons, including swords, daggers, spears, and javelins.

This picture fits with Mycenaean self-representation in elite iconography. Scenes of conflict (and hunting) appear both at microscale on seals and at macroscale on palatial wall paintings, for example. As well as appearing on wall paintings, chariots are a common decorative feature on a class of fine ware ceramics, particularly wine mixing bowls (kraters), that is found regularly on Cyprus and in coastal Levantine sites. Mycenaean iconography—in contrast to that in the Minoan world—emphasized such activities, but we should not read the prevalence of such depictions literally, particularly in assuming the Minoan states were by contrast peaceful.

Systems of Communication and Representation

Bronze Age Greece

“Mycenaean” and “Minoan” are, of course, modern coinages to label the inhabitants of Bronze Age Greece and Crete; we do not know what these groups called themselves. There is some evidence from outside the Aegean that hints at how they presented themselves on the international stage, although some are more skeptical of the nature of Aegean diplomatic links (e.g., Sherratt 2001, 216–224). No Aegean rulers appear in the Amarna correspondence, but the inclusion of major place-names such as Knossos and Mycenae in the so-called Aegean list in the mid-fourteenth-century BCE mortuary temple of Amenhotep III (cf. Bennet 2011, 159–160) implies an awareness of political units below the regional geographic terminology for Crete (*Keftiu*) or the mainland (*Tanay*). Similarly, the fourteenth- to thirteenth-century BCE Hittite geographical term *Ah ḫ iy(aw)a* may refer to a Mycenaean state—most likely Mycenae or Thebes, conceivably both, but at different times—even in one controversial instance implying that the king of *Ah ḫ iyawa* had the status of “great king.” What form of identity existed beneath such global terms, however, is unclear. Linear B offers evidence that inhabitants of particular settlements were identified as “Knossian,” “Pylian,” and so on, but we do not know if the Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the *state* of Pylos, for example, thought of themselves as “Pylians.” The possibility is suggested by documents from Thebes that (p. 251) include several references to a “Lakedaim(o)nian,” presumably (especially in light of the recent discovery at Ayios Vasileios) someone originating from Lakedaimon in Lakonia (Del Frio 2009, 57–58). Within Mycenaean polities, there is some evidence of identities not simply tied to place. Groups mentioned in Pylos texts, for example, like the *u-ru-pi-ja-jo* (*Ulumpiaioi*), the *o-ru-ma-si-ja-jo* (*Orumansiaioi*), or the *o-ka-ra₃* (*Oikhaliai?*), may reference *local* identities, perhaps from a period preceding palatial control.

It is likely that the Mycenaean ruling elite *projected* an identity that was homogeneous across the Aegean, and was based on their ability to create “special” materials, events, and rituals. These demonstrated a special relationship with the supernatural and also a connection to, and understanding of, the wider eastern Mediterranean. Rulers may have considered themselves qualitatively different from their subjects, sharing in an elite identity current across the Mycenaean and eastern Mediterranean worlds. Language, clearly not shared with other eastern Mediterranean states, may therefore not have been as significant an identity marker as it was in later Greek social history.

Palatial production deployed exotic materials, such as gold, ivory, or glass, in the creation of “special” products, or assembled as “composite” works, whose qualities were unique, such as the equipment for sacrificial banquets recorded at Pylos, replete with composite objects made of wood or stone, with carved or molded inlays in precious metal (gold, probably silver), blue glass (*kuwanos*), and ivory. Glass beads, not only manufactured from an exotic material (transported on the Uluburun wreck), but also mass-produced in identical form using molds, may well have “materialized” relationships between the palace and members of the subelite, in whose tombs they are regularly found (cf. Bennet 2008a).

Bronze Age Greece

Associations between the ruling elite and the supernatural were displayed in a number of ways. The *wanax* may have been regarded as godlike in some respects, if we take literally offerings of oil to him along with deities. Royal personnel also held land at *pa-ki-ja-ne* (probably *Sphagianes*), a sanctuary site (not yet identified) that gave its name to the district of the Hither Province in which Pylos lay. Linear B documents at Knossos, Chania, Pylos, and Thebes record state-sponsored offerings to deities, often dated by month, suggesting a ritual calendar; the commodities included oil (probably perfumed), honey, grain, less frequently gold (and silver?) vessels. Although references are not rare, it is likely that the overall amount offered represented a small proportion of the total commodities available to the state, perhaps less than 10 percent (Bendall 2007). Sanctuaries existed within settlements, although there is nothing known in the Mycenaean world as distinctive as the temple complexes of Mesopotamia, or even later Greece. The deities include names familiar from later Greek religion—Poseidon, Zeus, Hera, Hermes, more surprisingly Dionysos—as well as less familiar ones like female counterparts to Zeus and Poseidon; the main female deity was Potnia. Knossos texts also include what are probably local Cretan deities: Diktaian Zeus, Pipitunna, the “priestess of the winds,” and “all the gods,” presumably reflecting the Knossian ruling elite’s “hybrid” status.

(p. 252) Opportunities to experience the “special” world of the ruling elite probably came on the occasions of large-scale feasting events, held within the architectural frame of the palace, as well as at district centers with palatial sponsorship (in general, Wright 2004). At Pylos textual, iconographic, and zooarchaeological data combine with the architectural layout of the palatial center to suggest the nature of these events. Central was the provision of quantities of food and drink for numbers well in excess of 1,000, evidenced by the weight of meat calculated on the basis of osteological remains, the numbers of plain clay drinking cups stored in pantries, and the supplies listed on documents (Halstead and Isaakidou 2004). Cattle was the principal species consumed, and their bones were burnt, as a sacrifice, and then disposed of in special locations. Palatial iconography also focused on bulls, while provision texts, on the other hand, included all the ingredients released on such occasions: other animal species, grains, spices, and wine. In addition to the state, members of the elite contributed animals to such events in their own name (e.g., Killen 1994). Clearly more than just the highest echelons of society participated and access was managed to create a diacritic environment (cf. Dietler and Hayden 2001), only the “top people” permitted in the main *megaron* itself, the rest either in open courts within the palatial complex, or outside, with the palace façade as a backdrop (Bendall 2004).

Oral performance seems to have formed part of these events: a bard surrounded by feasters was depicted on a wall painting adjacent to the throne in the *megaron* at Pylos. Presumably such events acted to commemorate the achievements of the state, in the person of the king, in the same way as written texts did elsewhere in the ancient world. Indeed, Homeric epic poetry in Greece is the direct successor through oral tradition of

such performances (Bennet, in press). At Pylos these performances demanded the copresence of the *wanax*, in a carefully constructed “frame”—a throne in the main *megaron* flanked by a lion/griffin pairing on the wall—performing his power: a “first-person,” rather than “third-person,” ruler iconography (cf. Bennet 2007b).

Collapse

The period 1250 to 1150 BCE saw increasing disruption for the mainland Mycenaean centers. The sequence in the Argolid is clearest archaeologically. Mycenae and Tiryns, only a few kilometers apart, experienced mid-thirteenth-century BCE destructions, probably caused by earthquake, and extended their fortifications in the following period. Additional modifications to allow access to water sources from within were added before the end of the century, as also in Athens. At Tiryns, in addition, a large dam was built late in the thirteenth century BCE to redirect a stream responsible for floods. Both sites experienced destructions involving burning at the end of the LHIIIB ceramic phase, around 1200 BCE, but opinions are (p. 253) divided as to whether this was occasioned by a further earthquake (French 2010, 675–677; Maran 2010, 726–729). Clearly the state commanded the authority in the late thirteenth century BCE to be able to summon sufficient resources for such projects. Archaeological dating is not sufficiently refined to be able to say that the destructions are contemporary, but it is in this period that most Mycenaean centers, including Pylos at the opposite end of the Peloponnese and Thebes in Boeotia, were either destroyed or abandoned. The spread of the phenomenon makes it unlikely that we can attribute all to the same seismic event. Moreover, on many occasions in the prehistoric Aegean, earthquake damage was simply repaired, which suggests other factors in play, since the collapse precipitated at the end of the thirteenth century BCE was not reversed.

At Tiryns there was some “afterlife” in the twelfth century BCE. The overall settlement seems to have extended over 25 hectares, but reconfiguration of the citadel suggests a new interpretation of authority: a *megaron*-like structure was built within the ruins of the old main *megaron*, while the rest of the citadel remained unoccupied (Maran 2010, 729–731). A similar structure may have been built at Mycenae and that site too continued to be occupied in the twelfth century BCE (French 2010, 677–678). The pattern at Tiryns suggests the continued existence of a political authority but we have no way of telling its extent beyond the immediate region of Tiryns itself, although the presence of objects from Cyprus implies some continued external links. The situation at Tiryns suggests either a figure seeking to continue the role of the Mycenaean *wanax*, as a head of state, or the elevation of a local authority figure, the *basileus*, as the higher-level regional power structures disappeared. The picture embodied in Homer’s *Iliad* (the “Catalogue of Ships”) with Tiryns, under Diomedes, looking east and south, and Mycenae, under

Bronze Age Greece

Agamemnon, looking north and west to the Gulf of Corinth, may reflect the twelfth-century BCE situation in the Argolid.

Neither Tiryns nor Mycenae lasted beyond the twelfth century BCE as settlements of any size, and most Mycenaean centers had already shrunk or disappeared, like Pylos. Overall site numbers declined in most areas, catastrophically in some, such as Messenia. However, the pattern of destruction and abandonment was not universal and some centers of population seem to have remained, notably Argos and Athens on the mainland, and Knossos on Crete (Bennet 2007a, 207–209). The mosaic of small-scale polities that existed in this period may reflect the lower-level identities identified in the Pylos documents, which may well have resurfaced in the political breakdown of the Postpalatial period.

The causes of collapse around 1200 BCE were undoubtedly complex. Although earthquakes may have played a part, they had not previously caused irreversible regression. Attempts to correlate the collapse with other environmental factors, such as drought, plague, catastrophic erosion, and so on, have proven inconclusive, through either lack of evidence or poor chronological resolution. It seems likely, however, that the causes were ultimately social. The expansion of fortifications and the evidence of burnt destructions at some sites suggest conflict, either from outside (although there is little evidence for intrusive material culture) or from within. It is (p. 254) hardly coincidental that evidence exists elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean for conflict and collapse: destructions at Ugarit and on Cyprus, Egyptian retrenchment and conflict with the so-called Sea Peoples, and the collapse of the Hittite Empire. It is not difficult to see how the Aegean states, with their eastern Mediterranean links, could have been caught up in these events. Internally, a majority within the Mycenaean states may have come to resent rulers whose authority depended on external contacts to exchange its palace-managed products and to bring in exotic raw materials if that authority became compromised. Within the ruling elite, the plurality of interests that we see at Pylos—the *wanax*, *lawagetas*, “collectors,” and *hek^wetai*—may have created fission. Equally, in a relatively densely occupied landscape, the effects of poor crop yields may have been magnified, further undermining state authority. The influx of European metalwork types and of Cypriot materials, including knives in a new material, iron, suggests attempts to replace lost exchange opportunities.

There were a varied series of responses to this set of events. In the Argolid, some tried to maintain political institutions, presumably over much-reduced polities. In Messenia, there seems to have been catastrophic decline, the state center never rebuilt after circa 1200 BCE, and extreme population reduction, so large as to suggest mass emigration, not merely loss of life. The degree to which the state phenomenon on the mainland might have been a thin veneer (cf. Sherratt 2001) is suggested by the complete loss of writing, intimately bound up with economic administration, but not deployed in other contexts, and of monumental architecture. Also, the picture suggested by the Homeric and Hesiodic poetry of multiple, small-scale polities headed by *basileis* implies a return to

local-level authority after the state level disappeared. It is these small-scale polities, with local identities, that formed the basis of the new form of state that reemerged in the Aegean some 400 to 500 years later, the polis.

References

- Adrimi-Sismani, V. 2007. "Mycenaean northern borders revisited: New evidence from Thessaly." In M. L. Galaty and W. A. Parkinson, eds., *Rethinking Mycenaean palaces II*. Rev and expanded 2nd ed., 159–177. Los Angeles.
- Baines, J., and N. Yoffee. 1998. "Order, legitimacy, and wealth in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia." In G. M. Feinman and J. Marcus, eds., *Archaic states*, 199–260. Santa Fe, NM.
- Barrett, J. C., and P. Halstead, eds. 2004. *The emergence of civilisation revisited*. Oxford.
- Bendall, L. M. 2004. "Fit for a king? Hierarchy, exclusion, aspiration and desire in the social structure of Mycenaean banqueting." In P. Halstead and J. C. Barrett, eds., *Food, cuisine and society in Bronze Age Greece*, 105–135. Oxford.
- . 2007. *Economics of religion in the Mycenaean world: resources dedicated to religion in the Mycenaean palace economy*. Oxford.
- Bennet, J. 1985. "The structure of the Linear B administration at Knossos." *American Journal of Archaeology* 89: 231–249. (p. 255)
- . 1990. "Knossos in context: Comparative perspectives on the Linear B administration of LM II-III Crete." *American Journal of Archaeology* 94: 193–211.
- . 2001. "Agency and bureaucracy: Thoughts on the nature and extent of administration in Bronze Age Pylos." In S. Voutsaki and J. T. Killen, eds., *Economy and politics in the Mycenaean palace states*, 25–37. Cambridge
- . 2007a. "The Aegean Bronze Age." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 175–210. Cambridge
- . 2007b. "Representations of power in Mycenaean Pylos: Script, orality, iconography." In F. Lang, C. Reinholdt, and J. Weilhartner, eds., *ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΑΠΙΣΤΕΙΟΣ: Archäologische Forschungen zwischen Nil und Istros. Festschrift für Stefan Hiller zum 65. Geburtstag*, 11–22. Vienna.
- . 2008a. "Palace™: Speculations on palatial production in Mycenaean Greece with (some) reference to glass." In C. M. Jackson and E. C. Wagner, eds., *Vitreous materials and technology in the Bronze Age Aegean: A window on the East Mediterranean world*, 152–173. Oxford

- . 2008b. “‘Now you see it; now you don’t!’: The disappearance of the Linear A script on Crete.” In J. Baines, J. Bennet, and S. Houston, eds., *The disappearance of writing systems*, 1–29. London
- . 2008c. “The Linear B archives and the kingdom of Nestor.” In J. L. Davis, ed., *Sandy Pylos: An archaeological history from Nestor to Navarino*, 2nd ed., 111–133. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2011. “The geography of the Mycenaean kingdoms.” In Y. Duhoux and A. Morpurgo Davies, eds., *A companion to Linear B: Mycenaean Greek texts and their world*, Vol. 2, 137–168. Leuven.
- . In press. “Linear B and Homer.” In Y. Duhoux and A. Morpurgo Davies, eds., *A companion to Linear B: Mycenaean Greek texts and their world*, vol. 3. Leuven.
- Broodbank, C. 2000. *An island archaeology of the early Cyclades*. Cambridge.
- . 2004. “Minoanisation.” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 50: 46–91.
- Cherry, J. F., and J. L. Davis. 2001. “‘Under the sceptre of Agamemnon’: The view from the hinterlands of Mycenae.” In K. Branigan, ed., *Urbanism in the Aegean Bronze Age*, 141–159. Sheffield
- Cline, E., ed. 2010. *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*. New York.
- Davis, J. L., ed. 2008. *Sandy Pylos: An archaeological history from Nestor to Navarino*. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ.
- Davis, J. L., and J. Bennet. 1999. “Making Mycenaeans: Warfare, territorial expansion, and representations of the other in the Pylian kingdom.” In R. Laffineur, ed., *POLEMOS: Le contexte guerrier en Égéel’âge du Bronze*, 105–120. Liège
- Day, P. M., and D. E. Wilson. 2002. “Landscapes of memory, craft and power in pre-palatial and proto-palatial Knossos.” In Y. Hamilakis, ed., *Labyrinth revisited: Rethinking ‘Minoan’ archaeology*, 143–166. Oxford
- Del Freo, M. 2009. “The geographical names in the Linear B texts from Thebes.” *Pasiphae: Rivista di Filologia e AntichitàEgee* 3: 41–67.
- . 2012. “Rapport 2006–2010 sur les textes en écriture Hiéroglyphique crétoise, en Linéaire A et en Linéaire B.” In P. Carlier, Ch. de Lamberterie, M. Egetmeyer, N. Guilleux, Fr. Rougemont, and J. Zurbach, eds., *Études mycéniennes 2010: Actes du XIIIe colloque international sur les textes égéens, Sèvres, Paris, Nanterre, 20–23 septembre 2010*, 3–21. Pisa. (p. 256)
- Dietler, M., and B. Hayden, eds. 2001. *Feasts: Archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on food, politics, and power*. Washington, DC.

- Driessen, J. M. 1996. "The arsenal of Knossos (Crete) and Mycenaean chariot forces." In M. Lodewijckx, ed., *Archaeological and historical aspects of West-European societies: Album amicorum André Van Doorselaer*, 481–498. Leuven
- . 2000. *The scribes of the Room of the Chariot Tablets at Knossos: Interdisciplinary approach to the study of a Linear B deposit*. Salamanca.
- . 2001. "Centre and periphery: Some observations on the administration of the Kingdom of Knossos." In S. Voutsaki and J. T. Killen, *Economy and politics in the Mycenaean palace states*, 96–112. Cambridge
- Driessen, J., and C. Langohr. 2007. "Rallying round a 'Minoan' past: The legitimization of power at Knossos during the Late Bronze Age." In M. L. Galaty and W. A. Parkinson, eds., *Rethinking Mycenaean palaces II*. Rev and expanded 2nd ed., 178–189. Los Angeles.
- Driessen, J., and C. F. Macdonald. 1997. *The troubled island: Minoan Crete before and after the Santorini eruption*. Liège.
- Feldman, M. 2006. *Diplomacy by design: Luxury arts and an 'International Style' in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BC*. Chicago.
- Finley, M. I 1957. "The Mycenaean tablets and economic history." *Economic History Review* 10: 128–141.
- Foster, E. D. 1977. "An administrative department at Knossos concerned with perfumery and offerings." *Minos* 16: 19–51.
- French, E. B. 2010. "Mycenae." In E. Cline, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 671–679. New York
- Galaty, M. L., D. Nakassis, and W. A. Parkinson, eds. 2011. "Redistribution in Aegean palatial societies." *American Journal of Archaeology* 115: 175–244.
- García Ramón, J. L. 2010. "Reconstructing IE lexicon and phraseology: Inherited patterns and lexical renewal." In S. W. Jamison, H. C. Melchert, and B. Vine, eds., *Proceedings of the 21st Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, 69–106. Hempen
- Graziadio, G. 1998. "Trade circuits and trade-routes in the Shaft Grave period." *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 40: 29–76.
- Hägg, R., ed. 1997. *The function of the 'Minoan villa': Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 6–8 June 1992*. Stockholm.
- Halstead, P. 2007. "Towards a model of Mycenaean palatial mobilization." In M. L. Galaty and W. A. Parkinson, eds., *Rethinking Mycenaean palaces II*. Rev and expanded 2nd ed., 66–73. Los Angeles.

- Halstead, P., and V. Isaakidou. 2004. "Faunal evidence for feasting: Burnt offerings from the palace of Nestor at Pylos." In Halstead and Barrett, eds., *Food, cuisine and society in Bronze Age Greece*, 136–154. Oxford
- Hope Simpson, R., and D. K. Hagel. 2006. *Mycenaean fortifications, highways, dams and canals*. Sävedalen.
- Karnava, A. 2008. "Written and stamped records in the Late Bronze Age Cyclades: The sea journeys of an administration." In N. J. Brodie, J. Doole, G. Gavalas, and C. Renfrew, eds., *Horizon: A Colloquium on the prehistory of the Cyclades*, 377–386. Cambridge
- Killen, J. T. 1984. "Last year's debts on the Pylos Ma tablets." *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 25: 173–188. (p. 257)
- . 1994. "Thebes sealings, Knossos tablets and Mycenaean state banquets." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies (London)* 39: 67–84.
- . 2008a. "Mycenaean economy." In Y. Duhoux and A. Murpurgio Davies, eds., *A companion to Linear B: Mycenaean Greek texts and their world*, Vol. 1, 159–200. Leuven.
- . 2008b. "The commodities on the Pylos Ma tablets." In A. Sacconi, M. del Freo, L. Godart, and N. Negri, eds., *Colloquium Romanum: Atti del XII Colloquio Internazionale di Micenologia, Roma 20-25 Febbraio 2006*, Vol. 2, 431–447. Pisa.
- Knappett, C. 1999. "Assessing a polity in Protopalatial Crete: The Malia-Lasithi state." *American Journal of Archaeology* 103: 615–639.
- Lupack, S. 2008. *The role of the religious sector in the economy of Late Bronze Age Mycenaean Greece*. Oxford.
- Manning, S. 2010. "Eruption of Thera/Santorini." In E. Cline, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 457–474. New York
- Maran, J. 2010. "Tiryns." In E. Cline, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 722–734. New York
- McDonald, W. A., and G. R. Rapp Jr., eds. 1972. *The Minnesota Messenia expedition: Reconstructing a Bronze Age regional environment*. Minneapolis.
- Palaima, T. G. 2003. "'Archives' and 'scribes' and information hierarchy in Mycenaean Greek Linear B records." In M. Brosius, ed., *Ancient archives and archival traditions: Concepts of record-keeping in the ancient world*, 153–194. Oxford
- Parkinson, W. A., and M. L. Galaty. 2007. "Secondary states in perspective: An integrated approach to state formation in the prehistoric Aegean." *American Anthropologist* 109: 113–129.

Postgate, J. N. 2010. "The debris of government: Reconstructing the Middle Assyrian state apparatus from tablets and potsherds." *Iraq* 72: 19–37.

Pullen, D. J., and T. F. Tartaron. 2007. "Where's the palace? The absence of state formation in the Late Bronze Age Corinthia." In M. L. Galaty and W. A. Parkinson, eds., *Rethinking Mycenaean palaces II*. Rev and expanded 2nd ed., 146–158. Los Angeles.

Renfrew, C. 1972. *The emergence of civilisation: The Cyclades and the Aegean in the third millennium BC*. London.

Renfrew, C., and J. F. Cherry, eds. 1986. *Peer-polity interaction and socio-political change*. Cambridge.

Schoep, I. 2002. *The administration of Neopalatial Crete: A critical assessment of the Linear A tablets and their role in the administrative process*. Salamanca.

———. 2006. "Looking beyond the first palaces: Elites and the agency of power in EM III-MM II Crete." *American Journal of Archaeology* 110: 37–64.

———. 2010. "Crete." In E. Cline, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 113–125. New York

Shelmerdine, C. W. 1973. "The Pylos Ma tablets reconsidered." *American Journal of Archaeology* 77: 261–275.

———. 1985. *The perfume industry of Mycenaean Pylos*. Gothenburg.

———. 2008a. "Mycenaean society." In Y. Duhoux and A. Morpurgo Davies, eds. *A companion to Linear B: Mycenaean Greek texts and their world*, Vol. 1, 115–158. Leuven.

———, ed. 2008b. *The Cambridge companion to the Aegean Bronze Age*. New York. (p. 258)

Sherratt, E. S. 2001. "Potemkin palaces and route-based economies." In S. Voutsaki and J. T. Killen, eds., *Economy and politics in the Mycenaean palace states*, 214–238. Cambridge

Tomkins, P., and I. Schoep. 2010. "Crete." In E. Cline, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 66–82. New York

Trigger, B. G. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations: A comparative study*. Cambridge.

Whitelaw, T. 2001. "Reading between the tablets: Assessing Mycenaean palatial involvement in ceramic production and consumption." In S. Voutsaki and J. T. Killen, eds., *Economy and politics in the Mycenaean palace states*, 51–79. Cambridge

———. 2004a. "Estimating the population of Neopalatial Knossos." In G. Cadogan, E. Hatzaki, and A. Vasilakis, eds. *Knossos: Palace, city, state*, 147–158. London.

———. 2004b. "Alternative pathways to complexity in the Southern Aegean." In J. C. Barrett and P. Halstead, eds., *The emergence of civilisation revisited*, 232–256. Oxford

Bronze Age Greece

Wright, J. C., ed. 2004. *The Mycenaean feast*. Princeton, NJ.

———. 2006. “The formation of the Mycenaean palace.” In S. Deger-Jalkotzy and I. S. Lemos, eds., *Ancient Greece: From the Mycenaean palaces to the age of Homer*, 7–52. Edinburgh

———. 2008. “Early Mycenaean Greece.” In Shelmerdine, ed., *The Cambridge companion to the Aegean Bronze Age*, 230–257. New York

Yoffee, N. 2005. *Myths of the archaic state: Evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations*. Cambridge.

John Bennet

John Bennet is Professor of Aegean Archaeology at the University of Sheffield. His research interests lie in the archaeology of complex societies, particularly the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures of the Bronze Age Aegean; the archaeology and history of Crete; and early writing and administrative systems, especially Linear B.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Greek City-States

Mogens Herman Hansen

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Greek History, Social and Economic History, Greek and
Roman Law

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0010

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of city-states of *polis* in ancient Greece. It explains that a *polis* was a strongly institutionalized and centralized micro-state consisting of one city and its immediate hinterland, and that it had an advanced degree of urbanization whereby the majority of the population lived in the urban center. Aside from being the center of habitation, it was also the center of industry and trade, education and entertainment, political institutions, and defense. The chapter furthermore considers the relation between the *poleis*.

Keywords: city-states, polis, ancient Greece, micro-state, urbanization, industry and trade, urban center, education, political institutions

The Polis

Both in extent and in population, the largest of all the city-state cultures in world history was that of the Greek polis (pl., poleis), which dominated the eastern part of the Mediterranean world in the Classical and Hellenistic periods (Hansen 2006a, 7–28).

There were Greek poleis all over the Mediterranean world, from Emporion in the Pyrenees to Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan, and from Olbia at the mouth of the Bug River in Ukraine to Kyrene in Libya. Almost all these poleis had arisen or been founded in the period from 750 to 200 BCE, and as late as the sixth century CE some of them were still city-states, though most were just cities. Thus the ancient Greek city-state culture lasted

Greek City-States

for some 1,200 years, only exceeded by the thousands of years of history of the Sumerian and Babylonian city-states (Mieroop 1997, 6).

A polis was a strongly institutionalized and centralized microstate consisting of one city (polis) and its immediate hinterland (*chora* or *ge*). There were in all approximately 1,500 poleis (Hansen and Nielsen 2004). Over 600 are attested in Greece proper; over 400 were colonies or Hellenized communities along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; and in addition there were over 300 Hellenistic foundations in the Near East as far as the Indus River (Tscherikower 1927; Cohen 1995). But there were never 1,500 poleis at the same time. All through this period there were new poleis being founded and old poleis disappearing. At any given point of time in the Classical period there were at least a thousand poleis, and that makes the ancient Greek city-state culture the biggest in world history (Hansen 2006a, 31). The next biggest was that of the Aztecs in central America in the fifteenth century CE (Smith 2000, 591–593).

(p. 260) In contrast to many other city-state cultures, the Greek poleis did not lie together in one large region so that communication between them could take place by land. In this respect the Greek poleis were like the Phoenician and Malayan ones: most Archaic and Classical Greek poleis were on the sea. Only in the Hellenistic period did the Greeks found a long row of colonies well into the Persian Empire and far from the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Most early Greek city-states were by the sea or near the sea “like frogs round a pond” in Plato’s vivid phrase (Phaidon 109b; cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1271b34–5). And his remark is borne out by the fourth century BCE geographer known as Pseudo-Skylax, who lists poleis in the order in which they lie along the coast. Only occasionally is his list interrupted by the standard comment, “there are also some poleis inland” (Pseudo-Skylax, *Periplus*, chapters 34–36, etc.; Maps 9.1 and 9.2).

As the world looks today it is sea that divides and land that binds together. but in antiquity it was the other way round: communication was easiest by sea and by land it was complicated and costly. The Greeks were a seafaring people, and next to the polis it is the *limen*, the harbor, that is the commonest term for settlement in Pseudo-Skylax. With Classical Sparta as the one notorious exception, the ancient Greek city-state was anything but a society of xenophobic stay-at-homes. The Greeks were, on the contrary, very mobile and quite easygoing about letting strangers settle in their cities.

Population-wise there is no city-state culture that can measure up to ancient Greece. While we do not have precise figures, a cautious estimate is that in the fourth century BCE the population of all Greek poleis totaled at least 7.5 million people (Hansen 2006b, 27–29), and in the time of the Roman Empire there were about 30 million Greek-speaking people living in poleis (Millar 1993, 254).

Greek City-States



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 9.1 The Greek Polis of the Aegean World

In the fourth century BCE some 800 of the approximately 1,000 poleis had a territory of at most 200 square kilometers each. A polis covering 200 square kilometers seems to have had a population of, on average, about 6,000 people of whom no more than around 1,000 to 1,500 were adult male citizens. Many poleis covered less than 25 square kilometers and had a total population of no more than 1,000 inhabitants. In these 800 poleis, all citizens would know one another, and the polis was a face-to-face society of full citizens. But some 100 poleis

possessed a territory of over 500 square kilometers. These poleis had, on average, a population of about 30,000. and a good number of them lived up to the ancient ideal that a large polis was a *myriandros* polis, namely, a polis with 10,000 adult male citizens. So altogether the 800 small poleis accommodated no more than about 35 percent of all the ancient Greeks whereas the 100 large poleis counted for about 40 percent of the total population (Hansen 2006b, 23–24, 29–30). Largest of all the poleis were Athens and Sparta. Athens had a territory of 2,500 square kilometers and a population of perhaps over 200,000 people of whom some 30,000 were adult male citizens (Hansen 1999, 90–94). Including Messenia, Sparta covered over 8,000 square kilometers and had a population the same size as Athens, but only about 8,000 of these people were full citizens in the early fifth century, and in the fourth century BCE the number of citizens dropped to under 1,000 (Hodkinson 2000, 399–400). (p. 261) Of the colonies some were as large as or even larger than Athens and Sparta, namely, Akragas, Syracuse, Taras, Kyrene, and, in the Hellenistic period, Alexandria and Antiochia.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 9.2 Greek Colonization.

In order to understand what a polis was we must begin with an investigation of what the word means (Hansen 1998, 17–34). Polis is the word the ancient Greeks used to describe their principal type of state and community and it is the

(p. 262) (p. 263) most

common of all nouns in ancient Greek (Toner 2004). There are over 11,000 attestations in Archaic and Classical sources alone. The word polis has two basic meanings, namely, settlement and community. As a settlement a polis consisted of houses; as a community it was made up of human beings. But not every settlement and every community was a polis. In the sense of settlement a polis was primarily a nucleated settlement of some size, not just a village (*kome*), and in the sense of community it was a self-governing community. Polis has two principal meanings, "city" and "state." The word is often used in both senses simultaneously so that an apt rendering is "city-state." If the focus is shifted from the meaning of the word to its reference we observe, once again, that the two senses are virtually inseparable: an ancient Greek urban center is only called a polis if it is also the political center of a polis state; and, conversely, a polis in the sense of "state" almost exclusively applies to a small political community consisting of a city (polis) with its hinterland (*chora*). In the urban sense polis is sometimes used as the generic term for polis (city) and *chora* (hinterland). In the political sense polis can be applied to the entire territory including the urban center (Hansen 2007, 13–72). Two other political keywords are derived from polis in the sense of "state": *polites*, "citizen," and *politeia*, "citizenship." Politeia is used sometimes in a concrete sense about the citizenry and sometimes in an abstract sense about the privileges and obligations connected with being a citizen. A further development of this meaning is politeia in the sense of "constitution." Since the polis was mostly conceived as a community of citizens (*politai*), it is perfectly logical that the Greeks used the word for citizenship (*politeia*) about the structure of the polis and its political system (Hansen 2006a, 56–61, 110).

In Archaic sources polis sometimes means "stronghold" or "hilltop settlement" (equiv., *akropolis*), and that "stronghold" is the original meaning is apparent from the etymological link with words for stronghold in other old Indo-European languages: *pur* in Sanskrit, *pilis* in Lithuanian, and *pels* in Latvian.

Some of the fortified hilltop settlements of the dark centuries (1100–700 BCE), such as Zagora on Andros and Koukounaris on Paros, may in fact have been poleis in this sense. In the course of the Archaic and Classical periods polis in the sense of "hilltop settlement" disappeared, and in the Roman period only learned people would know about the original meaning (Hansen 2006a, 40).

It is still much debated whether the polis in the sense of city-state emerged in Hellas before the beginning of the colonization period circa 750 BCE, or whether it took shape in the colonies and then was copied in Hellas (Malkin 1987, 12; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 19). The polis seems to have emerged almost contemporaneously in both places. But the colonists had to set up a new self-governing community with an urban center built up from scratch that indicated that the polis as both a type of community and a type of urban settlement must soon have reached its mature form in the colonies, whereas the development was slower in Hellas itself. In Hellas the first poleis emerged along the coasts of the Aegean, partly in Asia Minor where the oldest identifiable poleis are Miletos and Smyrna, and partly in mainland Greece where, for example, Eretria, Athens, Argos,

and Corinth can be (p. 264) traced back to the eighth century BCE. The first poleis attested in datable written sources are Sparta (Tyrtaios, fragment 4.4), Thasos (Archilochos, fragment 228), and Dreros in Crete (Meiggs and Lewis 1989, 2.1–2).

Hellas itself was divided into regions each populated by a people (in Greek called an *ethnos*) with its own identity (Hall 1997; Morgan 2003), for instance, the Arkadians were settled in Arkadia (Nielsen 2002), the Thessalians in Thessaly, and so on. Each region was subdivided into poleis (Morgan 2001, 93; Hall 2007, 88–91), apart from a few regions in which one polis had succeeded in subduing the entire region and transforming it into one oversized polis. Athens and Sparta were such “regional poleis,” and that is one reason for their position as the two Great Powers in Classical Greece (Hansen 2009, 388). The poleis in Hellas emerged gradually, starting in the east and moving west. Apart from some early colonies along the coast of the Ionian sea, Aitolia (Funke 1997, 154), Akarnania (Gehrke 1994–95, 41–48), and Epeiros (Davies 2000, 260) were regions in which polis formation began late in the fifth century BCE and gathered momentum only in the fourth century and later. During the late Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, polis was the dominant form of settlement and community in all regions. But a citizen of a polis was, at the same time, the member of an *ethnos*. An *ethnos* was primarily a people. It sometimes acted as a political unit, especially in regions organized as federations, but the *ethnos* was not a type of state as the polis was (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 4–5).

The Greek poleis were all part of a city-state culture in which there was a clear divide between ethnic and political identity. Greeks living in one polis shared their language and culture with Greeks living in other poleis, and they recognized each other as belonging to the same people. They were all *Hellenes* and as such opposed to all the surrounding barbarian peoples. At the regional level, the citizens of the approximately forty poleis in Arkadia were all *Arkades*. But politically they considered themselves to be citizens of their own polis as opposed to citizens of other poleis (Hansen 2006a, 63–64). The specific political identity is reflected in the way they named themselves. When citizens from different poleis were together they used an adjectival form of the name of their polis as a kind of surname, which was added to the citizen’s name and patronymic. Thus, the full name of the architect Hippodamos was Hippodamos Euryphantos Milesios, that is, Hippodamos, the son of Euryphon of Miletos. The Greeks seem to have been the only people in history to use surnames that were not just habitation names but at the same time an indication of political status (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 58–69).

The Polis as a City

As in other city-state cultures the degree of urbanization was far more advanced than it was in other historic communities before the industrial revolution (Hansen 2000, 614). In small poleis the majority of the population lived in the urban center, (p. 265) while the others were settled in the hinterland either nucleated in villages or dispersed in farmsteads. Only in large poleis did the majority of the population live in the hinterland. And even in the largest poleis it can be conjectured that a fourth to a third of the population lived behind the walls of the polis town (Hansen 2006a, 77–84). Many of them were farmers who went out daily to their fields outside the city and home again each evening to their dwellings in the city. There was no sharp divide between the urban and the rural population and all were citizens. In this respect there is a marked difference between the ancient Greek polis and, for instance, the medieval Italian city-state culture where citizenship was a prerogative of the urban population (Hansen 2000, 32).

As a town the polis was first of all a center of habitation and, according to how polis towns emerged, we can distinguish between four different types: (a) a small settlement, often placed on a fortified rocky hilltop (*akropolis*), was extended downhill and grew to become a proper town enclosed by a new wall; (b) a cluster of closely set villages were eventually merged into a conurbation with a defense circuit enclosing the entire settlement (Snodgrass 1987–1989, 56–64); (c) by a formal act of migration, called a *synoikismos*, people living in a number of nucleated settlements were gathered together in one of the settlements or moved to a central place where a proper city was built from scratch (Moggi 1976; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 115–119); (d) a number of colonists went abroad to found a colony invariably centered on a nucleated settlement that rapidly grew to become a polis (Tsetskhladze 2006, xlii–xlvi). Regardless of their origin many poleis had an *akropolis* sometimes reserved for temples and other public buildings, but sometimes used for habitation as well.

Every polis was divided into publicly owned quarters, used for walls, streets, harbors, markets and all kinds of monumental architecture, as against privately owned habitation quarters, used for (mostly) fairly simple family houses (Jameson 1990; Hölscher 1998). Mansions and palaces were virtually unknown before the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, and that goes even for poleis governed by a tyrant (Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 25–30). Only citizens were entitled to own a house; metics (i.e., guest workers) and other foreigners had to rent their homes from citizens.

The houses were originally built without a plan and they were either scattered or placed along crooked streets, but already in the Archaic period an astonishing number of towns adopted a centralized planning of streets and habitation quarters. Rectangular blocks were framed by the streets and subdivided into lots of equal size, mostly 8, 10, or 12 lots per block, and often standardized terrace houses were constructed on the lots. A famous

example of this form of grid-planning was Piraeus, the port of Athens, built around 450 BCE by Hippodamos of Miletos. From him this form of town planning is often called “Hippodamian,” although on Sicily, for example, it can be traced back to circa 700 BCE (Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994; Shipley 2005).

The most urgent need of the polis as a habitation center was a sufficient supply of fresh water, and as a specific type of public monumental architecture many poleis were adorned with one or more fountain houses where the inhabitants (p. 266) could supplement the water drawn from wells in private houses (Wycherley 1967, 198–209).

Apart from being a center of habitation, the polis was a center of (a) political institutions, (b) cults, (c) defense, (d) industry and trade, and (e) education and entertainment.

1. *Re (a)*. As a political center the polis accommodated all the central political institutions and the buildings in which they resided: first virtually every polis seems to have had a *prytaneion* (ceremonial building) with a dining room in which the chief magistrates of the polis hosted prominent guests, and with an eternal flame burning on the altar of Hestia (the goddess of the hearth) and symbolizing the eternal life of the polis. Secondly there was a town hall (*bouleuterion*), in which the council (*boule*) held its meetings, and thirdly a number of *archeia*, that is, offices for the various boards of magistrates. For some unknown reason specific law courts (*dikasteria*) are only exceptionally mentioned in our sources whereas it is not infrequently recorded that various public buildings erected for other purposes could be used as law courts. Similarly, only a few poleis had a separate meeting place (*ekklesiasterion*) for the people’s assembly (*ekklesia*), whereas there are quite a few references to assemblies of the people being held in the theater. In the Archaic and Classical periods the public political buildings were small and undistinguished and, apart from the city walls, monumental political architecture began to appear only in the fourth century. Furthermore, the *agora* was no longer seen as the institutionalized political center of the polis where assemblies were held but rather as the social and economic center of the town (Martin 1974, 253–286; Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994).
2. *Re (b)*. As a center of public cult the polis, and especially its *akropolis*, housed a number of sanctuaries, some with monumental buildings such as temples and theaters. But many sanctuaries were either suburban or extraurban (Coldstream 1993). The suburban sanctuaries were placed in the immediate vicinity of the town; the extraurban were often situated right on the border of the polis, almost as a demarcation of the territory (Polignac 1995). As time went on new cities had their urban sanctuaries interspersed between the habitation blocks and no longer erected on the akropolis. Sanctuaries of Athene, Apollon, and Aphrodite are typically found inside the walls whereas sanctuaries of Zeus, Demeter, Hera, and Poseidon are often situated in the hinterland (Schachter 1992).

3. *Re (c)*. As a center of defense the polis was a town whose walls could protect its inhabitants, and inside the walls was enough open space to accommodate the rural population for as long as the enemy occupied and pillaged the countryside (Hansen 2006b, 38-45). Towns with an akropolis often had a double defense system: one wall protecting the akropolis, and one the lower city. In the fourth century almost every polis had a town (p. 267) wall (*teichos*), or at least a walled akropolis; and a defense circuit had become an essential aspect of the town just as it was in the Middle Ages (Camp 2000; Hansen 2006b, 16-17). But there is an important difference in the function: in the medieval town the sharp division between city and country began at the gates. They were guarded all the time and closed during the night. Furthermore, customs were often exacted on all goods that passed the gates. In the ancient Greek city walls were erected for defense purposes only; the gates were guarded in time of war, but in peacetime people could get in and out even during the night. Thus, in contradistinction to what happened in the Middle Ages, the walls around an ancient Greek polis did *not* become a barrier between the town and its countryside (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 137). On the other hand they became gradually an essential feature of the polis, and if the focus is the polis of the Classical period it is not misleading to take the walls to be one of the elements of the ideal type (Ducrey 1995, 253-254).
4. *Re (d)*. As an economic association the centers of the polis were the marketplace (*agora*) (Kenzler 1999) and the harbor (*limen*). Every polis had an *agora*, which in Archaic and early Classical towns was just an open square marked off with boundary stones (*horoi*). A polis might have an *emporion*, that is, a market reserved for foreign trade (Hansen 2006c). From the Classical period onward the *agora* was often adorned with a *stoa* (a roofed colonnade). Especially in poleis with a grid plan, the *agora* was flanked with two or even three *stoai*, some of which were used for shops and others as offices of magistrates.
5. The economy of a polis town was characterized by a considerable degree of division of labor, and the inhabitants had to satisfy an essential part of their daily needs by buying goods that they had either produced themselves or bought from others for the purpose of sale in the market. Many city dwellers were farmers who had their plots of land within walking distance from their homes in the city but they were not just subsistence farmers; probably, they produced some of their crops for the market. With a few exceptions, notably Sparta, the polis was not a Sombartian consumption city in which a small group of absentee landowners derived their maintenance from taxes and rents exacted from a much larger rural population (Hansen 2004; *contra*: Finley 1981).
6. *Re (e)*. As a center of education and entertainment the polis was the place where the privately owned schools for children were found (Harris 1989, 96-102). The more advanced education of adults was often connected with the public *gymnasia*, which, however, were primarily centers for sports and military training. In the Archaic and early Classical periods *gymnasia* were usually placed outside the polis, but in the course of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods the *gymnasion* was

moved inside the walls and became perhaps the most important public building housing what was now the most important institution in the polis, the *ephebeia*, that is, the education and military training of young citizens (Gauthier 1995).

(p. 268) Of entertainments, often connected with the major religious festivals, the two most spectacular types were competitions in sports, conducted in a *palaistra* (a wrestling-hall), a *stadion*, or a *hippodromos*, often connected with a *gymnasion* (Delorme 1960); and drama competitions, performed in a theater that was usually placed in a sanctuary consecrated to Dionysos (Isler 1994). In the Archaic and early Classical periods both the *gymnasion* (with *palaistra*, *stadion*, and *hippodromos*) and the theater were simple constructions that in most poleis have left no traces whatsoever, but all three types of building became monumentalized in the course of the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE.

The Polis as a State

Like the modern state a polis can be described as a centralized system of political institutions in possession of the necessary means of coercion by which the legal order can be enforced within a territory over a people. Also, a three-digit number of sources shows that the Greeks often saw the polis as an abstract public power above both ruler and ruled, that is, as an agent that passed laws, inflicted a punishment, founded a colony, went to war, took up a loan, and so on. In democratic poleis and in some oligarchic poleis as well, the laws of the polis were passed by all citizens in assembly but were enforced by boards of magistrates either elected or selected by lot for a short period. In every polis some were rulers and some were ruled, but the citizens took turns. Rotation in office was a principle applied in all the poleis we know about. In the administration of justice prosecution was usually left to private citizens—as it was in all European states until the nineteenth century. And self-help was allowed against adulterers, robbers, and some types of burglar, as was the case in all European states of the early modern period (Hansen 2002; contra: Berent 1996; 2000). But there are of course differences between the polis and the modern state. One is that the modern state is primarily identified with the government or the territory, whereas the polis, first of all, was identified with the people, that is, the citizens. A polis was the community of adult male citizens (*politai*), and the name of the state was not the name of the country but the people. We use the toponym “Athens” about the Athenian city-state; its ancient name was *hoi Athenaioi* (the Athenians) or *Athenaion ho demos* (the Athenian people). Louis XIV of France is supposed to have said, “l’état, c’est moi”; the Athenians could, with even greater justice, have said, “The polis is us” (Hansen 1998, 117–123).

An important difference between the polis as a town and as a state concerned membership of the group. The population of a polis was divided into three “orders”: citizens (*politai*), free foreigners (often called *metoikoi*), and slaves (*douloi*). The polis town with its hinterland was an economic and social community of all households (*oikoi*), those of the metics as well as those of the citizens. The community comprised all members of the household, free as well as slaves of both (p. 269) sexes and all ages. As a state the polis was the community of citizens with respect to their political institutions, and active membership was restricted to adult male citizens no matter whether they lived in the town or in its hinterland. But the citizens’ wives and children as well as free foreigners and slaves were excluded. Female citizens possessed citizen status and transmitted citizen status to their children, but they did not themselves possess citizenship in the functional sense (Hansen 1999, 86–88).

In practice citizenship was defined as being born from citizens whereas, functionally, the citizens were those who participated in the running of the political institutions of one’s polis. The political organization varied from polis to polis according to whether the constitution was monarchical, oligarchical, or democratic. In a democracy the two definitions of citizenship coincided; in an oligarchy citizenship was restricted to those

natural-born citizens who also fulfilled a census qualification; and in a monarchy, in the strict sense of the term, the monarch was the only person who was a citizen in the functional sense. Since a polis was principally a community of citizens, the polis par excellence was the democratically governed polis, and from the fourth century BCE and onward there is an undeniable trend to associate the concept of polis with the concept of democracy.

However, most oligarchic poleis had a popular assembly with restricted powers. It was usually open to all citizens so that it was the holding of (major) offices only that was restricted to those who passed the census qualification. Similarly, tyrants often convened all citizens to a meeting of the assembly, and in many cases their power lasted no longer than they could rely on the acclamation of the people. Conversely, even democracies could impose restrictions on access to offices. Thus, irrespective of its type of politeia, the typical polis had at least some political institutions in which all citizens were entitled to participate whereas noncitizens were excluded. With variations, most poleis had roughly similar political institutions, namely, a popular assembly (*ekklesia*), a council (*boule*), a senate (*gerousia*), boards of magistrates (*archai*), and specific law courts (*dikasteria*), to be found especially in poleis in which the administration of justice was not left to the *archai* (Hansen 2006a, 111–113). These institutions are attested in laws and decrees passed by poleis from all parts of the Greek world (Rhodes 1997). One example is the moderate oligarchic constitution of Kyrene. It was inscribed in, probably, 322 BCE and happens to be the oldest surviving written constitution in the world. The sections about the political institutions prescribe that the citizens are all those born from citizens in Kyrene and in the dependent poleis founded by Kyrene. Full citizen rights, however, are restricted to a body politic (*politeuma*) of 10,000 *politai* who fulfill a census requirement of 2,000 *drachms*. The basic political institutions are: a popular assembly to which all 10,000 *politai* have access; a council (*boule*) manned with 500 citizens selected by lot for two years; a senate (*gerousia*) manned with 101 citizens elected for life by the *ekklesia*; various boards of officials of which the most important is a board of five generals (*strategoi*) elected by the assembly to assist the ruler of Egypt, Ptolemaios, who is *strategos* for life; and councilors, senators, and officials who are to be over fifty years of age. Administration of justice in capital cases (p. 270) rests with the *boule*, the *gerousia*, and 1,500 citizens selected by lot from among the 10,000 (*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* vol. 9, no. 1).

In the Archaic period the constitution of a polis was either monarchical (kingship or tyranny) or oligarchical (aristocracy or oligarchy). In the course of the sixth century BCE democracy grew up as an alternative form of government (Robinson 1997), in the course of the fifth and fourth centuries it became the dominant form of constitution (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 80–86), and in the Hellenistic period down to the mid-second century BCE almost all poleis were democracies that had their *autonomia* (no longer independence, but just self-government) confirmed by royal decree (Carlsson 2005). In the course of the Roman period democracy was, once again, replaced by oligarchy: the council (*boule*)

eclipsed the assembly (*ekklesia*) as the important decision-making body of government, and the poleis were now governed by an upper class that monopolized all important magistracies (Jones 1940, 113–115, 120–121).

One reason for the development from monarchy and oligarchy toward democracy seems to be that in the ancient Greek polis world democracy was a strong and efficient form of government. Today it is a common belief that it must be impossible to conduct a consistent line of policy in a state in which all major decisions are taken directly by the people in assembly. Such decisions will be made on the spur of the moment, and the state will follow a zigzag course in domestic as well as in foreign policy. If all states were direct democracies, direct popular rule might be feasible, but a direct democracy will always be unable to assert itself against its much more efficiently governed neighbors in which power rests with a single ruler or a government. In Classical Hellas, about half the poleis were monarchies or oligarchies, and half were democracies, most of them direct democracies of the Athenian type (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 80–86). If it were true that a direct democracy is an unwise and inefficient form of government compared with oligarchies ruled by an elected elite, or monarchies ruled by a strong leader, then it follows that the many hundred ancient Greek democracies would soon have succumbed to the oligarchies and monarchies, and democracies would have been crushed and eliminated from the political map in the course of the many centuries the poleis existed. But that did not happen. On the contrary, if we judge the Athenian democracy by the consistency and efficacy of its policy, we have to note that democratic Athens was much more efficient and much stronger than its oligarchic neighbors, though these neighbors were as populous as Athens. Like Athens, Thebes was strongest, in fact the strongest polis in Hellas in the fourth century, when it was democratically governed. Again, both in the fifth and in the fourth centuries, there is little evidence that the Athenians followed a zigzag course in their foreign policy (Harding 1995). One major reason for the opposite development in the later Hellenistic period is the Roman conquest of the eastern Mediterranean world.

When we move from the institutions to the tasks they performed, the differences in the poleis become apparent and we can distinguish among several types. In a polis that was a dependency of another polis or a member of a federation, (p. 271) foreign policy and defense was usually left to the hegemonic polis or a federal government, and the self-government of the polis was restricted to domestic policy (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 87–94). Furthermore, the degree to which economic and social life was regulated by the community varied considerably from polis to polis. In democratically governed poleis a difference between a public and a private sphere was emphasized, and the ideal was that, in the private sphere, every citizen should be allowed to live as he pleased. In such poleis economic, social, and educational issues were peripheral to what was regulated by the polis. In other city-states the polis institutions interfered with all aspects of human life, and there was no private sphere in the proper sense. Athens and Sparta were seen as the two model poleis representing each type, and since antiquity it has been debated whether

the majority of the other approximately 1,498 poleis were organized like Athens or Sparta (Hansen 1998, 84–106).

Apart from legislation concerning citizenship and the political institutions themselves, there were three major fields of activity, which in all poleis were regulated by the community: (a) defense, (b) cult, and (c) finance.

a. *Defense*. Every polis had its own army, and armies mobilized by leagues or federations were composed of contingents from the individual poleis. The core of a city's armed forces was the heavy-armed infantry, the hoplites (Schwartz 2009). The connection between the hoplite and the citizen was so close that in some poleis citizenship was restricted to those who served as hoplites in the army. In some of these poleis citizenship was even restricted to citizens of military age so that a citizen lost his political rights when, probably at the age of sixty, he had to leave the army. In other poleis, however, the veterans were allowed to retain their political rights (Hansen 2006a, 116). Sparta seems to have been a polis of this type (Murray 1993, 159–180). It has often been suggested that the emergence of the hoplite *phalanx*—now dated to circa 750 BCE—was closely connected with the emergence of the polis, and that the development of mass fighting in close formation went hand in hand with the development of a political community ruled by a decision-making citizen body of hoplite farmers (Raaflaub 1997, 53–57). In the Classical democratic polis not only hoplites but also light-armed soldiers and rowers in the fleet became citizens in the political sense of the term. Also middle-class metics had to serve as hoplites in the *phalanx* side by side with the citizen soldiers. Thus, the identification of hoplites with citizens gradually lapsed (Hansen 2006a, 117). And a further dissociation of the military and the political aspect of the polis took place in the course of the Classical and Hellenistic periods when citizen armies were increasingly supplemented with or even replaced by mercenaries (McKechnie 1989, 79–100).

b. *Cult*. It is sometimes stated that religion was the dominant aspect of community life (Sourvinou-Inwood 1990, 295, 322). And “polis religion” is often used as a technical term for ancient Greek religion in general (Sourvinou-Inwood 1990). Religion was indeed extremely important, but it constituted one aspect of polis life only and not necessarily the focal one, which was the polis as a community (p. 272) of politai. Both as a political and as a military organization the polis was a male society from which women were excluded (Vidal-Naquet 1983, 26). Religion was different. Here women took part in the rites and cults of both their household and the polis itself. There were some cults from which women were excluded; but similarly, there were cults from which men were excluded, such as the Thesmophoria (Parker 2005, 270–289). Most goddesses were served by priestesses rather than by priests (Holderman 1985). In religion women were insiders; they joined in the performance of many rituals, and even possessed an official status (Parker 2005, 218–219).

Polis religion was religion (a) used by the polis itself, (b) organized by the polis, or (c) directly created by and related to the polis and its institutions (Burkert 1995, 202). In fact, “polis religion” has conveniently been subsumed under those three headings: (re a)

Every communal activity was accompanied by religious acts; thus a meeting of the people's assembly in Athens was opened with a sacrifice, a prayer, and a curse. (re b) Both gods and heroes were worshipped publicly by the whole community in connection with the large festivals, which were organized by the polis and usually attended by all the polis's inhabitants (not just the citizens). (re c) As the polis developed, new political cults were set up: most poleis had a specific patron god or goddess (Cole 1995); many of the polis's symbols were connected with its tutelary deity; and the annual festival for the patron deity was one of the grandest. In the council house there was, typically, a cult for Zeus or Athena with the epithet Boulaios (-aia). Similarly, abstract political concepts were sometimes deified: in Athens the democratic constitution was represented as a goddess, *Demokratia*, to whom the *stratego*i made annual sacrifices (Alexandri-Tzahou 1986). *Homonoia*, Concord, was another personified deity worshiped in many poleis, especially in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Thériault 1996). Deification of the polis itself, however, is very rare and attested in the Hellenistic period only.

c. *Finance*. Conceived as a community of citizens the polis was only to a small extent an economic organization. The right to own landed property was confined to citizens (Hennig 1999, 592–596). And yet, with the exception of Sparta and perhaps some other poleis, foreigners and slaves took part in trade and crafts side by side with citizens and often on the same footing. To a large extent the polis involved itself in the economic life of the people only to collect taxes from them and to ensure that a citizen could get his daily bread at a manageable price. In this respect there was a fundamental difference between ancient Greece and, for example, the Italian city-states of the Middle Ages. In the latter the right to work at a craft or trade was a political right reserved to the citizens just as much as the right to participate in politics, and the political institutions were built directly upon the economic organization of the guilds and associations (Hansen 2000, 169–170).

From a modern point of view the political institutions are often seen as a framework through which the state regulates community life. The Greeks took a different view of their polis. They took participation in political life to be a value in itself, and the political institutions were not seen as a frame of the polis but as the core of the polis (Murray 1990, 19–22; Hansen 2006a, 115).

(p. 273)

Civil War (Stasis)

Ideally the city-state was a community of citizens who regarded the polis as their fatherland and were willing to sacrifice life and possessions for it (Nielsen 2004). But very few poleis were societies in harmony who lived up to the ideal. Most poleis were split into two rival poleis, one of the rich, who supported oligarchy, and one of the poor, who preferred democracy. The rival parties could also be different ethnic groups living side by side in the same polis, a situation typical of poleis founded by colonists from several different city-states. Or the community could be polarized about two rival groups of rich contending for power. The result was almost constant political tension that often led to civil war, in which every group was ready to work hand in hand with a like-minded group in a neighboring city or in one of the powerful cities that led the shifting alliances of poleis. The members of both groups were therefore prepared to sacrifice the independence and autonomy of their city if, in return, they could keep or win power in the polis. Such a group was called a *stasis*, and the word was also used as the term for the civil war itself that often resulted from the splitting of rival groups (Gehrke 1985).

The Relation between Poleis

Politically, the polis was a self-governing but not necessarily an independent state. The Greeks distinguished between poleis with and without *autonomia*, which in the Classical period denoted independence but in the Hellenistic period just self-government.

Everywhere in the Mediterranean world Greek poleis formed complicated hierarchical networks of hegemonic poleis, independent poleis, and dependent poleis. The Spartan polis dominated some score of perioikic poleis scattered over Lakedaimon and Messenia. Thebes was the leader of the Boiotian federation whose other members were half a score of dependent poleis. In the second half of the fifth century BCE almost all the approximately 330 members of the Delian League were dependent city-states (*hypekooi* poleis) that had been deprived of their *autonomia* by Athens. Syracuse came to rule all poleis in eastern Sicily, and so on (Hansen 1995; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 87–94).

War between poleis was endemic, and for most poleis war was the norm and peace the exception. Longer periods of peace were only experienced under the Roman principate. During the first three centuries CE the Hellenic poleis, except some near the frontiers, enjoyed the *Pax Romana* and accordingly could afford to neglect their walls and defenses. Many wars were fought between neighboring poleis, such as the arch-enemies Sparta and Argos, and others between alliances of poleis, such as the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) between the Delian League led by Athens and the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta. The constant wars (p. 274) often resulted in the annihilation of poleis, sometimes physically by razing the city to the ground, killing all men and enslaving the women and children. The Greeks called it *andrapodismos* (enslaving). One example is the destruction of Melos by the Athenians in 416 BCE (Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 120–123). In other cases a conquered polis was deprived of its self-government and reduced to being a civic subdivision of the conquering polis; thus Mykenai, Tiryns, Orneai, Midea, and Hysiai were all conquered by Argos in the period 468–416 BCE and transformed from poleis into *komai* (villages) (Piérart 2004, 599). But often the conquered city-states were allowed to retain their status of poleis and became dependencies (poleis *hypekooi*) instead of mere municipalities. Examples of dependent poleis of this type are the perioikic poleis in Lakedaimon dominated by Sparta (Shipley 1997), and all the poleis in Asia Minor, which were under Lydian and Persian rule in the late Archaic period, then under Persian rule once again in the period 386–334 BCE and later ruled by Hellenistic monarchs until, eventually, they became poleis in the Roman province of Asia (Rubinstein 2004, 1057–1058). Other types of dependent poleis were the result of alliances and federations.

Major alliances often developed into “empires” dominated by the hegemonic polis (see Morris, chapter 10). The Delian League, for example, was formed in 479/478 BCE as an alliance of autonomous poleis led by Athens, but was transformed into an organization of dependent poleis under Athenian rule. The Peloponnesian League underwent a similar

development, especially in the period 404–371 BCE, and even Thebes became a Spartan dependency in the years 382–379 BCE

From circa 500 BCE onward a constantly increasing number of poleis united to form federations (see Mackil, chapter 11). All poleis in a region, such as Phokis or Achaia, set up a *koinon*, a community with a kind of federal government responsible for defense and foreign policy, whereas all other matters rested with the individual poleis. The members of the federation were still poleis, but no longer independent poleis. Some federations were dominated by a hegemonic polis, which almost invariably tried to interfere with domestic policy in all the member poleis. Thus, the small Boiotian poleis were dominated by Thebes, and the Chalkidian poleis by Olynthos. The oldest known federations are the Lokrian and Phokian, both attested circa 500 BCE. In the fourth century BCE at least a third of all poleis in Hellas had become member states of one of the regional federations (Larsen 1968; Beck 1997). The subjugation of poleis due to conquest, the formation of alliances and federations, as well as the creation of the large Hellenistic monarchies had the result that, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, almost all poleis were dependent poleis.

Diplomatic relations between poleis were not maintained by permanent ambassadors but by envoys (*presbeis*) sent out, whenever needed, to negotiate, for example, a truce or an alliance (Adcock and Mosley 1975). In addition to the sending-out of envoys, a whole network of personal relations between prominent persons in the various poleis was developed through institutionalized guest-friendship (*xenia*) (Herman 1987), later connected with the political structure through the institution called *proxenia*: the city of Eretria, for example, would pass a decree whereby (p. 275) a citizen of Taras became the *proxenos* (host and protector) of any Eretrian citizen who happened to visit Taras (Meiggs and Lewis 1989: 82; Marek 1984).

In conclusion, from beginning to end the poleis did not form a network of independent peer polities, but rather a complicated hierarchy of self-governing communities with other types of permanent political communities both above and below polis level. Above the polis were, first of all, the federations each normally embracing all the poleis within a region. Below the polis was a network of civic subdivisions: *phylai* (tribes), *demoi* and *komai* (municipalities), and *phratriai* and *gene* (brotherhoods and clans, originally kinship groups but later just artificial subdivisions of the body politic; Jones 1987).

Ancient Greek civilization remained a city-state culture and the Greeks never tried to unite all poleis into one large territorial state, like the Greece created in 1830–1832. All attempts to form larger political units took the form of alliances and federations, undoubtedly because both types of association were compatible with the preservation of the polis as the basic political unit. In some regions small poleis were swallowed up by the larger ones; but when that happened the result was still a large city-state and not a large territorial unitary state. To form such a community was as foreign to Greek mentality and culture as, for instance, the abolition of slavery.

References

- Adcock, F., and D. J. Mosley. 1975. *Diplomacy in ancient Greece*. London.
- Alexandri-Tzahou, O. 1986. "Demokratia." In *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* III.1: 372–374. Zurich.
- Beck, H. 1997. *Polis und koinon*. Stuttgart.
- Berent, M. 1996. "Hobbes and the 'Greek Tongues.'" *History of Political Thought* 17: 36–59.
- . 2000. "Anthropology and the Classics: War, violence and the stateless polis." *Classical Quarterly* 50: 257–289.
- Burkert, W. 1995. "Greek poleis and civic cults." In M. H. Hansen and K. Raaflaub, *Studies in the ancient Greek polis*, 201–210. Stuttgart.
- Camp, J. 2000. "Walls and the polis." In P. Flensted-Jensen, T. Heine Nielsen, L. Rubinstein, eds., *Polis and politics: Studies in ancient Greek history presented to Mogens Herman Hansen on his sixtieth birthday, August 20, 2000*, 41–57. Copenhagen.
- Carlsson, S. 2005. *Hellenistic democracies: Freedom, independence and political procedure in some East Greek city-states*. Uppsala.
- Cohen, G. M. 1995. *The Hellenistic settlements in Europe, the islands and Asia Minor*. Berkeley.
- Coldstream, J. N. 1993. "Greek temples: Why and where?" In P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir, eds., *Greek religion and society*, 67–97. Cambridge.
- Cole, S. G. 1995. "Civic cult and civic identity." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *Sources for the ancient Greek city-state*, 292–325. Copenhagen.
- Davies, J. K. 2000. "A wholly non-Aristotelian universe: The Molossians as ethnos, state, and monarchy." In R. a. Brock and S. Hodkinson, eds., *Alternatives to Athens: Varieties of political organization and community in ancient Greece*, 234–258. Oxford. (p. 276)
- Delorme, J. 1960. *Gymnasion: Étude sur les monuments consacrés à l'éducation en Grèce*. Paris.
- Ducrey, P. 1995. "La muraille est-elle un élément constitutif d'une cité?" In M. H. Hansen, ed., *Sources for the ancient Greek city-state*, 245–256. Copenhagen.
- Finley, M. I. 1981. "The ancient city: From Fustel de Coulanges to Max Weber and beyond." In M. I. Finley, ed., *Economy and society in ancient Greece*, 3–23. London.

Funke, P. 1997. "Polisgenese und Urbanisierung in Aitolien im 5. und 4. Jh. v. Chr." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *The polis as an urban centre and as a political community*, 145–188. Copenhagen.

Gauthier, P. 1995. "Notes sur le rôle du gymnase dans les cités hellénistiques." In M. Wörle and P. Zanker, eds., *Stadt und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus*, 1–11. Munich.

Gehrke, H.-J. 1985. *Stasis: Untersuchungen zur den inneren Kriegen in der griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* Munich.

———. 1994–1995. "Die kulturelle und politische Entwicklung Akarnaniens vom 6. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr." *Geographia Antiqua* 3/4: 41–48.

Hall, J. M. 1997. *Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity*. Cambridge.

———. 2007. *A history of the Archaic Greek world*. Oxford.

Hansen, M. H. 1995. "The 'autonomous city-state': Ancient fact or modern fiction?" In M. H. Hansen and K. Raaflaub, eds., *Studies in the ancient Greek polis*, 21–43. Stuttgart.

———. 1998. *Polis and city-state: An ancient concept and its modern equivalent*. Copenhagen.

———. 1999. *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*. 2nd ed. Bristol.

———, ed. 2000. *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*. Copenhagen.

———. 2002. "Was the polis a state or a stateless society?" In T. H. Nielsen, ed., *Even more studies on the ancient Greek polis*, 17–47. Stuttgart.

———. 2004. "The concept of the consumption city applied to the Greek polis." In T. H. Nielsen, ed., *Once again: Studies in the ancient Greek polis*, 9–47. Stuttgart.

———. 2006a. *Polis: An introduction to the ancient Greek city-state*. Oxford.

———. 2006b. *The shotgun method: The demography of the ancient Greek city-state culture*. Columbia.

———. 2006c. "Emporion: A study of the use and meaning of the term in the Archaic and Classical periods." In G. R. Tsatsikis, ed., *Greek colonisation: An account of Greek colonies and other settlements overseas*, 1–39. Leiden.

———, ed. 2007. *The return of the polis: The use and meanings of the word polis in Archaic and Classical sources*. Stuttgart.

———. 2009. "Was Sparta a normal or an exceptional polis?" In S. Hodkinson, ed., *Sparta: Comparative Approaches*, 385–416. Swansea.

- Hansen M. H., and T. Fischer-Hansen. 1994. "Monumental Political Architecture in Archaic and Classical Greek *Poleis*." In D. Whitehead, ed., *From political architecture to Stephanus Byzantius*, 23–90. Stuttgart.
- Hansen, M. H., and T. H. Nielsen, eds. 2004. *An inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis*. Oxford.
- Harding, P. 1995. "Athenian foreign policy in the fourth century." *Klio* 77: 105–125.
- Harris, W. V. 1989. *Ancient literacy*. Cambridge, MA.
- Hennig, D. 1999. "Rechtliche und wirtschaftliche Aspekte." In W. Hoepfner, ed., *Geschichte des Wohnens, I: 5000 v.Chr–500 n.Chr.*, 587–600. Ludwigsburg.
- Herman, G. 1987. *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city*. Cambridge.
- Hodkinson, S. 2000. *Property and wealth in Classical Sparta*. London. (p. 277)
- Hoepfner, W., and E.-L. Schwandner, 1994. *Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland*. 2nd ed. Berlin.
- Holderman, E. S. 1985. "Le sacerdotesse: requisiti, funzioni, poteri." In G. Arrigone, ed., *Le donne in Grecia*. Bari.
- Hölscher, T. 1998. *Öffentliche Räume in frühen griechischen Städten*. Heidelberg.
- Isler, H. P. 1994. "Die antike Theaterarchitektur." In P. C. Rossetti and G. P. Sartorio, eds., *Teatri greci e romani*, vol. 1, 86–124. Rome.
- Jameson, M. H. 1990. "Private space and the Greek city." In O. Murray and S. Price, eds., *The Greek city from Homer to Alexander*, 171–195. Oxford.
- Jones, A. H. M. 1940. *The Greek city from Alexander to Justinian*. Oxford.
- Jones, N. 1987. *Public organisation in ancient Greece*. Philadelphia.
- Kenzler, U. 1999. *Studien zur Entwicklung und Struktur der griechischen Agora in archaischer und klassischer Zeit*. Frankfurt.
- Larsen, J. A. O. 1968. *Greek federal states*. Oxford.
- Malkin, I. 1987. *Religion and colonization in ancient Greece*. Leiden.
- Marek, C. 1984. *Die Proxenie*. Frankfurt.
- Martin, R. 1974. *L'urbanisme dans la Grèce antique*. 2nd ed. Paris.
- McKechnie, P. 1989. *Outsiders in the Greek cities in the fourth centuryBC*. London.

Greek City-States

- Meiggs, R., and D. Lewis, eds. 1989. *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century B.C.* Oxford.
- Mieroop, M. van de 1997. *The ancient Mesopotamian city.* Oxford.
- Millar, F. 1993. "The Greek city in the Roman period." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *The ancient Greek city-state*, 232-260. Copenhagen.
- Moggi, M. 1976. *I sinecismi interstatali greci.* Vol. 1. Pisa.
- Morgan, C. 2001. "Ethne, ethnicity, and early Greek states, ca. 1200-480 b.c." In I. Malkin, ed., *Ancient perceptions of Greek ethnicity*, 75-112. Cambridge, MA.
- . 2003. *Early Greek states beyond the polis.* London.
- Murray, O. 1990. "Cities of reason." In O. Murray and S. Price, eds., *The Greek city from Homer to Alexander*, 1-25. Oxford.
- . 1993. *Early Greece.* 2nd ed. London.
- Nielsen, T. H. 2002. *Arkadia and its poleis in the Archaic and Classical periods.* Göttingen.
- . 2004. "The concept of *patris*." In M. H. Hansen and T. H. Nielsen, eds., *An inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis*, 49-52. Oxford.
- Parker, R. 2005. *Polytheism and society at Athens.* Oxford.
- Piérart, M. 2004. "Argolis." In M. H. Hansen and T. H. Nielsen, eds., *An inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis*, 599-619. Oxford.
- Polignac, F. de 1995. *Cults, territory and the origins of the Greek city-state.* Chicago.
- Raaflaub, K. 1997. "Soldiers, citizens and the evolution of the early Greek *polis*." In L. G. Mitchell and P. J. Rhodes, eds., *The development of the polis in Archaic Greece*, 49-59. London.
- Rhodes, P. J. 1997. *The decrees of the Greek states.* with D. M. Lewis. Oxford.
- Robinson, E. 1997. *The first democracies: Early popular government outside Athens.* Stuttgart.
- Rubinstein, L. 2004. "Ionia." In M. H. Hansen and T. H. Nielsen, eds., *An inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis*, 1053-1107. Oxford.
- Schachter, A. 1992. "Policy, cult and the placing of Greek sanctuaries." In A. Schachter, ed., *Le sanctuaire grec*, 1-57. Geneva.
- Schwartz, A. 2009. *Reinstating the Hoplite: Arms, armour and phalanx fighting in Archaic and Classical Greece.* Stuttgart. (p. 278)

Greek City-States

Shipley, G. 1997. "The other Lakedaimonians: The dependent perioikic *poleis* of Laconia and Messenia." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *The polis as an urban centre and as a political community*, 189–281. Copenhagen.

———. 2005. "Little boxes on the hillside: Greek town planning, Hippodamos and polis ideology." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *The imaginary polis*, 335–403. Copenhagen.

Smith, M. E. 1996. *The Aztecs*. Oxford.

———. 2000. "Aztec city-states." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 581–596. Copenhagen.

Snodgrass, A. 1987–89. The rural landscape and its political significance. *Opus* 6–8: 53–70.

Sourvinou-Inwood, C. 1990. "What is *polis* religion?" In O. Murray and S. Price, eds., *The Greek city from Homer to Alexander*, 295–322. Oxford.

Thériault, G. 1996. *Le culte d'homonoia dans les cités grecques*. Lyon.

Toner, J. 2004. *Greek key words*. Cambridge.

Tscherikower, V. 1927. "Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen von Alexander dem Grossen bis auf die Römerzeit." *Philologus* Suppl. 19: 1–111.

Tsetskhladze, G. 2006. "Revisiting ancient Greek colonisation." In G. Tsetskhladze, ed., *Ancient Greek colonisation: An account of Greek colonies and other settlements overseas*, vol. 1, xxiii–lxxxiii. Leiden.

Vidal-Naquet, P. 1983. *Le chasseur noir*. Paris.

Wycherley, E. R. 1967. *How the Greeks built cities*. London.

Mogens Herman Hansen

Mogens Herman Hansen at the University of Copenhagen is a leading authority on Athenian democracy and the Greek polis.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Greek Multicity States

Ian Morris

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Greek History, Social and Economic History, Greek and
Roman Law

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0011

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter, which explores the history of multi-city states in ancient Greece during the archaic and classical periods, explains that leaders of small city-states were forced to attempt to establish multi-city states because of increasing competition for scarce resources in an age of expanding population and pressures from neighboring cities. It analyzes why these attempts failed, arguing that it is more fruitful to consider state formation as an ongoing process of structural change than as a one-time event.

Keywords: multi-city states, ancient Greece, scarce resources, expanding population, state formation, archaic period, classical period

Introduction

The story of the ancient Greek state is usually written in three parts. It opens in the early first millennium BCE with an episode of rapid change and state formation; next, in the middle of the millennium, comes an age when hundreds of poleis (see chapter 9) and a few larger *ethnê* coexisted; and finally, in the late first millennium BCE, is another period of change, when Greek states were incorporated into larger, non-Greek empires. The middle phase, roughly covering the archaic and classical periods (conventionally ca. 700–323; all dates are BCE unless noted otherwise), tends to be seen as a time of stable state forms (relative, at least, to what came before and after). In one influential paper, the sociologist W. G. Runciman (1990) even called the polis an evolutionary dead-end, “doomed to extinction.”

In this chapter I want to suggest that this approach is not a very good way to see the middle period of the history of the Greek state, because it conceals the dynamism of Greek state formation and leaves some of the best-known and most successful (in the terms defined by Ober 2008) Greek states out of the story. Fifth-century Athens, for example, is usually described as an empire, different from—and irrelevant to—state formation. Sixth- through fourth-century Sparta is normally seen as the head of an alliance, again irrelevant to the history of the state. A string of other expansionist states, including Gela, Syracuse, Thebes, Olynthus, Mytilene, and Argos, often get ignored altogether.

(p. 280) We might do better, I believe, to follow the lead of political scientists like George Steinmetz, who criticizes the widespread tendency to imagine state formation “as a mythic, initial moment in which centralized, coercion-wielding, hegemonic organizations are created within a given territory.” Instead, Steinmetz insists, “states are never formed once and for all. It is more fruitful to view state formation as an ongoing process of structural change and not as a one-time event” (Steinmetz 1999, 8–9).

Never was this truer than in first-millennium Greece, a world in which the process of state formation operated relentlessly. (I use the term “state formation” here to mean the centralization of political power in officeholders’ hands and officeholders’ attempts to extend that power, both deeper into civil society and outward, by enlarging the units they governed—thereby generating conflict and competition among officeholders, between officeholders and those they administered, and between competing states.) Driven by competition for scarce resources in an age of improving climate, expanding population, economic growth, and pressure from neighbors, the leaders of the small city-states that started congealing in the eighth century struggled to deepen their organizational capacity and turn themselves into rulers of multicity states. Had they succeeded, as the Romans did in Italy, they would presumably—again like the Romans—have expanded their struggle and turned their territorial states into multiethnic empires.

The Greek experience was entirely typical of processes that were operating all across Eurasia. In the early first millennium hundreds of Eastern Zhou city-states in northern China, scores of Ganges Valley city-states in India, and more than a thousand Mediterranean city-states struggled. This went on until a few larger territorial states—Jin, Qi, Chu, and Qin in China; Magadha in India; Macedon, Rome, and Carthage in the Mediterranean—swallowed them up in the mid-first millennium. Then the territorial states struggled until a few great empires—the Qin in China, Mauryan in India, and Roman in the Mediterranean—swallowed them too in the third century (Morris 2010, 227–279).

What is untypical about the Greek case, though, and what gives it such value for the comparative history of early states, is that quite detailed firsthand accounts survive of the unsuccessful struggle to turn city-states into multicity states. In the cases of India, China, and Rome, we are forced to rely heavily on texts edited, rewritten, or invented centuries

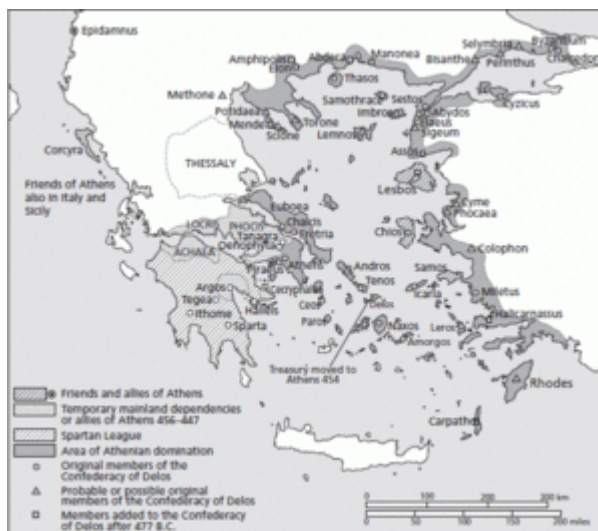
Greek Multicity States

after the events. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, where similar processes unfolded in the third millennium, our written evidence is even worse. In Mesoamerica and the Andes, it is practically nonexistent (cf. Feinman and Marcus 1998; Trigger 2003; Yoffee 2005).

For all their problems, Herodotus, Thucydides, and classical inscriptions may be the best game in town for understanding how city-states turn into multicity states—or, in the Greek case, why they sometimes *fail* to do so. To make proper use of this material, though, we have to abandon the conventional assumptions that classical Greek poleis were evolutionary dead-ends and that classical Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse were exceptions to a general pattern of static “Normalpoleis” (as Ruschenbusch 1985 called them).

(p. 281) The Process of State Formation in First-Millennium BCE Greece

The collapse of state power in Mycenaean Greece (see chapter 8) and much of southwest Asia between 1200 and 1000 created what is often, with some justification, described as a “Dark Age.” Population shrank, trade dried up, craft skills disappeared, and living standards slumped (much is controversial about this; I describe my views in Morris 2007). The tenth century, however, saw a classic episode of regeneration of complex society. It began in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt but drew in the Aegean (Morris 2006a), and by the eighth century this process was transforming the whole Mediterranean (Maps 10.1 and 10.2).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 10.1 The Athenian Empire



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 10.2 Sicily and Southern Italy

By 750 the shift from the Sub-Boreal to the Sub-Atlantic climate regime was driving Mediterranean-wide population growth, migration, and international trade. In southwest Asia formidable new empires had emerged, and in the Aegean, Greeks were clustering into hundreds of small city-states, competing fiercely

over increasingly scarce resources. Much of what happened in eighth- and seventh-century Greece neatly fits the sociologist Charles Tilly's famous maxim (1975, 73) that "states (p. 282) made war, and war made states." The Greek proto-states seem to have organized themselves increasingly effectively to fight for land, honor, and plunder, relying on massed heavy infantry (Hanson 1989 is the classic account of hoplite tactics; van Wees 2004 presents a more gradualist version). The creation of political offices to facilitate war making went hand-in-hand with centralization of law, the adoption of alphabetic writing, and the revival of monumental art and architecture (Snodgrass 1980, 15-84 remains the best account; I summarize my own interpretations in Morris 2009a).

Some features of this process were widely shared across the Greek world, such as a general rejection of one-man rule and divine authority in favor of high (by ancient standards) levels of male egalitarianism (Morris 1996; Morris and Powell 2009), but from early on, we see multiple paths of state formation in Greece. Again taking a lead from Tilly, we can clarify the process by dividing these into capital- and coercion-intensive routes. Tilly defined capital as "any tangible mobile resources, and enforceable claims on such resources," and coercion as "all concerted application, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage...Where capital defines a realm of exploitation, coercion defines a realm of domination" (Tilly 1992, 17, 19).

States always rely on a combination of coercion and capital, but, Tilly argued, we can best understand second-millennium CE European history by distinguishing (p. 283) between those states that relied primarily on domination (e.g., tribute-taking empires) and those that relied primarily on exploitation (e.g., city-states). This distinction also helps make sense of the three most successful state-builders of mid-first millennium Greece: Athens (capital-intensive), Sparta (coercion-intensive), and Syracuse (a combination of both).

Greek Multicity States

Why some states lean toward capital and some toward coercion always involves historical accidents, but in Greece, at least, geography explains much of the pattern. On the whole, coastal groups tended to be more involved with trade, forming larger cities and concentrations of capital; inland groups tended to be more agriculturally self-sufficient, having smaller concentrations of capital and people (cf. Fleck and Hanssen 2006).

By the eighth century, inland Sparta was already pursuing a coercion-intensive path, using violence to turn neighbors in Laconia and Messenia into dependent helots. Early Spartan history is particularly disputed (e.g., Cartledge 1979; 2001, 21–38; Ducat 1990; Luraghi and Alcock 2003; Nafissi 2009), but it seems that by the sixth century (and probably much earlier) the Spartan state was moving in very peculiar directions. It developed high levels of human capital, in the form of extraordinary warriors who could train full-time thanks to helot farm labor, but the state needed very little physical capital since the warriors provided their own arms and rations. It therefore required minimal capacity for taxation and bureaucracy.

According to Herodotus (1.66), Sparta tried to extend helotage into Arcadia but it suffered a disastrous defeat around 560. Thereafter, Sparta shifted toward extending its power through bilateral agreements with other cities. Historians rarely consider this a path of state formation, yet the Peloponnesian League (as the Spartan organization is normally called; see Ste. Croix 1972, 101–124; Cartledge 1987, 242–273; Funke and Luraghi 2009) functioned to provide Sparta with by far the biggest hoplite army in Greece. It was, in effect, a coercion-intensive form of state formation requiring little capital and even less organizational capacity. Members paid no taxes before 382 but did provide troops, which freed Sparta from the need to train and pay bureaucrats or put garrisons in subject cities. Sparta did intervene in allied cities to help pro-Spartan factions keep control of local government, but otherwise it left the poleis to their own business.

The guiding policies of the classical Spartan state—to use force to preserve helotage but to back away from entanglements that might undermine its distinctive system of property rights—were in place before 500. When Sparta cast this principle aside, imposing garrisons and taxes on Athens' former subject cities after 404, it failed dismally (Cartledge 1987).

Within certain limits, this low-end, coercion-heavy system worked well, but already by 500 simply having a strong phalanx was no longer enough. To defeat Persia in the early fifth century, Sparta needed Athens to provide a fleet; and to defeat Athens in the late fifth century, Sparta needed Persia to provide a fleet. Classical Spartan history was a constant struggle to maintain state power in an increasingly competitive and expensive environment without having to introduce reforms that would threaten the Spartan way of life. Proponents of structural (p. 284) reform, like Pausanias (perhaps) in the 470s, Lysander after 407, and Cinadon in 397, were always rejected—with the result that Sparta lost Messenia after a single major defeat in 371 and was humbled in 331 and 222.

Greek Multicity States

The obvious contrast to Sparta's failed path of state formation is Athens. Its early history, like Sparta's, is famously murky, but in the sixth century it pursued a capital-intensive, commercial path. By 500, Athens, Corinth, Miletus, Samos, and Syracuse were probably the biggest cities in Greece, each with over 10,000 residents, and I suspect that Athens, Miletus, and Samos had reached the point that they required grain imports in most years (Morris 2006b, 39). The incentives to build state-funded fleets were growing, and since cities seem to have generated much of their revenue through indirect taxes on trade, the increasing scale of this trade to feed burgeoning cities also provided means to pay for fleets. Cities that followed this path started building navies and deepening state organizational capacity around 500, and it is probably no coincidence that the first democracies, run by the same men who rowed in the fleets, appeared at just this time.

Great silver strikes of circa 520–515 (Picard 2001) and 483/2 (Herodotus 7.144) kick-started the rise of Athenian naval power, but the real crux in Athenian state formation—Athens' equivalent of Sparta's defeat at Tegea around 560—came in 478/7, after the victory over Persia. The critical innovation was to establish *phoros*, a regular annual payment from individual cities into a central treasury, controlled largely by Athens, and used to fund collective military activities. Historians often translate *phoros* as “tribute,” but this is most misleading: it was in functional terms a tax rather than an occasional demand, and controlling it allowed Athens' rulers—the citizen assembly—to enforce an effective monopoly on legitimate violence, the core concept in most definitions of the state (see chapter 1). By the 420s at the latest Athens regularly intervened in the day-to-day running of its subject cities, in the process turning what had begun as a military alliance into an Aegean-wide state, with Athens as its capital city, the Athenian assembly as its government, and formerly independent poleis as provincial towns.

This “Greater Athenian State,” as I like to call it (Morris 2009b), had much deeper organizational capacity than anything previously seen in the Greek world. But—as Thucydides (1.23) famously observed—Athenian state formation triggered defensive reactions in other states. By the late 410s Athens was fighting both Sparta and Syracuse, and Persia and Carthage were being drawn in. Athens' eventual defeat in 404 was a turning point in Greek history; no polis managed to recreate Athens' high-end, capital-intensive path of state formation. Athens could rebuild its wealth by new methods in the fourth century (Ober 2008), but the absence of a strong tax-taking state led to crushing military defeats in 338, 322, and 262.

The poleis of western Greece pursued a third path, combining elements of the capital- and coercion-intensive routes. Aegean colonists founded the first Sicilian settlements in the late eighth century, seizing agricultural plains that were much more productive than most of the land in the Aegean and establishing long-distance trade routes (De Angelis 2000; 2002). The most powerful western poleis were simultaneously centers of capital accumulation and centers of military domination (p. 285) over non-Greek populations, and by the sixth century Syracuse and Akragas were as rich as any cities in the Aegean.

Whether because of continuing flows of immigrants, their open frontiers with indigenous peoples, or the enormous (by Greek standards) wealth an upper class amassed, the western poleis tolerated remarkable (again, by Greek standards) levels of patrimonial rule. By methods we do not really understand (Luraghi 1994, 165–169), Hippocrates, sole ruler of Gela, conquered several neighboring Greek cities and assembled a formidable army in the 490s. When he died, in 491, his cavalry commander Gelon took over his small kingdom, and after defeating Syracuse in 485 Gelon transferred his throne to that city and set up his brother Hieron in Gela. Gelon then built up Syracuse's power by deporting the populations of defeated Greek cities to his capital, using mercenary troops against his subjects, and marrying into the family of Theron, ruler of Akragas. By 480, when he defeated a Carthaginian attack on Himera, Gelon had built one of the strongest Greek multicity states, using techniques that had as much in common with Near Eastern as with Aegean rulers (see chapters 3, 4, and 7).

Conflicts within the tyrant families and between their hired troops and subjected citizens tore the Sicilian multicity states apart in the 460s, only for democratic Syracuse to start bullying its neighbors again in the 430s. We cannot be sure whether the smaller cities were paying regular taxes or providing troops for Syracuse, but the process worried Athens enough that in 433 it made alliances with Rhegion and Leontini. The Athenian military intervention that followed in 427–424 is usually judged a failure, and the Athenians prosecuted their generals for malfeasance, but it did block the revival of this new Syracusan multicity state.

In the kind of paradox that fills the history of state formation, when Athens' famous second intervention in Sicily went down to a more spectacular defeat in 413, Carthage invaded Sicily, in large part to head off a revival of Syracusan power—only to bring on precisely that outcome. Dionysius made himself sole ruler (tyrant [*tyrannos*] or king [*basileus*], depending on the source) of Syracuse in 406/5 and forged a new multicity state greater still than Gelon's. An inscription dated 394/3 even calls him leader (*archon*) of all Sicily (Tod 1948, no. 148; Harding 1985, no. 20).

Little is clear about the fate of this regime, but a combination of elite feuding, popular uprisings, and wars with the increasingly centralized Carthaginian state (see chapter 13) brought on such a profound collapse that in 345 Syracuse asked Corinth to send new colonists to repopulate Sicily (Smarczyk 2003).

In one sense, we might say that the Syracusan path toward state formation had succeeded by 345 in that a loose multicity state did struggle on through the crises. In another sense, though, the Syracusan path had clearly failed, because Carthage firmly controlled western Sicily and regularly threatened Syracuse itself. In 311 it seemed like the end was nigh, only for the new tyrant Agathocles to force numerous Sicilian and south Italian poleis back under Syracusan control (Consolo Langher 2000). Then the pendulum swung again, and in 279 Syracuse, Akragas, and Leontini all offered to submit to Pyrrhus of Epirus if he would save them from (p. 286) Carthage. In 263 a new tyrant, Hieron II,

adroitly accepted a Roman alliance, and Rome then threw Carthage out of Sicily. Syracuse now turned into a prosperous client kingdom—only to join its old enemy Carthage in fighting Rome in 215, leading to catastrophe.

By 200 the classical experiments with state formation were over. The elites of Athens and Sparta had mostly come to terms with being provincial burghers in a world of empires, and those of Syracuse, who had not learned this lesson, were dead. Over the next fifty years the moment of truth would arrive for a new set of Greek experiments that had produced the Aegean *koina* (see chapter 11), and the following century saw the end of the last Greek experiments, conducted by Macedonian and Greek emigrants to southwest Asia and Egypt (see chapter 12).

Greek states were anything but static. The tiny poleis of the eighth century barely merited the notice of Assyrian or Egyptian kings, but the multicity states of the fifth century were serious powers by anyone's standards. Yet despite the variety of paths they followed, none succeeded in establishing an enduring territorial state, let alone becoming a multiethnic empire. The obvious question is: Why not?

Hellenists used to see this as an important question, but it dropped off the agenda in the last two generations. It does not even appear in Mogens Hansen's excellent book *Polis* (2006a), and what answers can be found in the existing literature are often unconvincing. Historians Robert Griffith and Carol Thomas (1981), for instance, suggested that it was a nonproblem because city-state systems rarely turn into territorial states. But this is mistaken; most ancient empires grew out of city-state systems (see Yoffee 2005). The most coherent answer comes from Runciman, who argued that "the *poleis* were all, without exception, far too democratic...[their institutions] ruled out the possibility of effective and sustained concentration of power at the top" (1990, 364–365).

After reviewing the surviving evidence, I will spend most of this chapter considering Runciman's answer by examining the Greek multicity states' political systems; structures of cooperation, adjudication, and enforcement; military power and resource extraction; economic functions; patterns of belief; symbolic integration; and identity. At the end I will return to the multicity states' failure.

The Evidence

Mid-first-millennium Greece probably is better documented than any other society at a comparable stage of state formation. The surviving written sources are, however, overwhelmingly by Athenians or about Athens. Of roughly 150 fifth-century cultural figures listed in the *Oxford classical dictionary* (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996), 52 percent were born in Athens, and fully 70 percent spent their careers there; and in fifth-

and fourth-century literature as a whole, Athens is mentioned twice as often as Sparta, the next most prominent city (Ober 2008, 53–55).

(p. 287) The most valuable texts are the narrative histories by Herodotus (ca. 490–420), covering roughly 550–479; Thucydides (ca. 454–400), covering 479–411 but concentrating on 431–411; and Xenophon (ca. 430–350), whose *Hellenika* covers 411–362. All three emphasized Athens but included valuable digressions on Sparta. Xenophon—who was Athenian but lived in Sparta for several years—also wrote short treatises about that city. The narrative histories say much less about Syracuse, for which we must rely on the later writer Diodorus of Sicily (lived ca. 80–20). Diodorus had access to now-lost primary sources, but where we can check his account he often made mistakes. A rich corpus of philosophical, legal, dramatic, and poetic texts (chiefly Athenian) contains more useful details, and we can supplement this with much later authors, like the biographer Plutarch (lived ca. 50–120 CE), although such accounts are often colored by anachronism.

The other major body of texts is several hundred public inscriptions carved on stone. The earliest state inscriptions go back to circa 600, but state decrees proliferated in Athens after 462. There has been much argument over their dating (see Papazarkadas 2009), but it now seems that most were carved after 430. Other Greek states put up far fewer inscriptions.

Greece is one of the most thoroughly explored archaeological territories on earth, and artifacts have been central to studying state formation in the period before 500 (e.g., Snodgrass 1980; 2006) and to understanding demography, ecology, and economics after 500. However, no one has yet applied the material record systematically to question the structure of post-500 states.

Political Systems, Cooperation, Adjudication, and Enforcement

Greek poleis had odd political structures. Unlike most ancient states, they vested great power in broad male citizen groups, and in extreme cases—such as democratic Athens—the mass of male citizens effectively ran the state. “Middling” rule was a central plank of political ideology from at least 700 (Ober 1989; Morris 1996). This was why Runciman concluded that poleis were “far too democratic” to turn into territorial states.

In Athens for most of the period 507–322, all male citizens, regardless of wealth, could vote on state decisions, hold most offices, and serve on juries (Hansen 1991). In Sparta, by contrast, the two kings and elected ephors and elders controlled important functions, but its citizen assembly (with a wealth qualification) nevertheless had an important say in state policy (Andrewes 1966; Ste. Croix 1972, 124–51). Neither Athens nor Sparta had much in the way of police or standing armies to guarantee internal peace or impose legal decisions, relying instead on social sanctions and self-help. The latter could slip into violence, but on the whole, poleis were (p. 288) relatively peaceful places. By 500 it was rare for men to go around armed. Sparta was unusual in tolerating more open use of force (Hodkinson 1983; Hunter 1994; van Wees 1998; Herman 2008).

Relations between male citizens and their coresidents were more hierarchical and coercive. Women were completely excluded from political power and normally faced significant economic restrictions. Resident aliens, who were numerous in Athens and Syracuse, were likewise excluded from political power and normally had little chance of becoming citizens. Imported chattel slaves, who were also common in Athens and Syracuse, were even more thoroughly excluded and had few legal protections; and the serf-like helots and *killyrioi* working Spartan and Syracusan lands were in some ways even more downtrodden. Runciman’s remarks about Greek democracy apply only to the free male citizens, normally just 10 to 20 percent of the resident group.

Between 465 and 405 the political sociology of Syracuse’s male citizen community resembled that in Athens, although elected generals and the rich may have had more formal power (Aristotle, *Politics* 1304a27; Diodorus 11.86–87). The monarchs who reigned in 485–465, 405–357, 318–289, and 271–212, however, centralized authority dramatically. Hieron I (reigned 478–466) famously remarked that “the masses are most disagreeable to live with” (Herodotus 7.156), and he reduced the poor to political marginality, using mercenaries to police them.

The male citizen communities in western poleis often struck Aegean Greeks as highly fragmented (e.g., Thucydides 6.17), perhaps because of their colonial origins (Jackman 2005). Some historians (e.g., Luraghi 1994, 369; Consolo Langher 1996, 286–288) interpret a passage in Diodorus (11.26) as a reference to Gelon (reigned 485–478) calling

Greek Multicity States

a citizen assembly, but the text in fact only mentions a gathering of troops. There is no good evidence for Syracusan tyrants consulting their poorer subjects.

Runciman suggested that the apparent contradictions between Sicily's patrimonial states and his thesis that poleis were too democratic for successful state formation in fact "tell strongly in favour of it" (1990, 363). This conclusion, however, seems to depend on treating western and Aegean poleis as different kinds of states, the former hierarchical and showing serious potential for growth and the latter egalitarian and showing no such potential. The speed with which tyrannies turned into democracies in the late 460s suggests otherwise; even in Sicily, poor men were more conscious political actors than in most non-Greek ancient societies.

Runciman also noted—quite rightly—that Athens' mild treatment of its subject cities was "a world away from expansion such as Roman consuls or Venetian doges would have conceived of it" (1990, 361), but the fact remains that it was a move in the same direction. As soon as one city started drawing others into its orbit, building a multicity state, it inevitably began looking more like those typical premodern systems in which a small, culturally homogeneous ruling class lords it over fragmented local communities. The male citizen bodies of Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse were relatively democratic internally; but seen from the outside, all were narrow ruling cliques. Athens tolerated and within certain limits even encouraged (p. 289) male democracy within its subject cities (Brock 2009), but as Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse began turning into multicity states they inevitably took over powers from formerly autonomous poleis, little by little turning what had been free citizens into subjects.

Neither Athens nor Syracuse tolerated independent foreign policies among their subject cities. Over time Athens absorbed nearly all local armed forces, and Syracuse probably did the same. Athens' subject cities probably had some say in foreign policy in the 470s and gradually lost that over time; for Syracuse we have less evidence, but there is no hint of any city opposing tyrants' decisions. Sparta never tried to impose this level of control, and the poleis that provided so many of its hoplites could not only oppose Spartan policy (most famously in 506, when Corinth aborted a Spartan attack on Athens) but also even make war on one another.

As the fifth century wore on, Athens increasingly intervened in local government. It put "the severest pressure" (Thucydides 1.99) on cities that were slow to pay tax, including imposing Athenian garrisons and officials on them. It eventually required some lawsuits to be heard in Athens and insisted on Athenian weights, measures, and coinage. Athens expropriated local resources and, when it felt it was necessary, used force against uncooperative cities.

This first happened around 471, to prevent Naxos from reneging on the *phoros* and becoming a free-rider on everyone else's efforts to defend the Aegean against renewed Persian attacks. Subject cities regularly provided troops to coerce free-riders, which probably means that the Greater Athenian State had at least some legitimacy in their eyes (cf. Low 2007, 233–248). Athenians liked to think that their government was the

Greek Multicity States

friend of free poor men in the subject cities (e.g., Lysias 2.55–56), and some historians (e.g., Ste. Croix 1954–1955) conclude that poor men in the subject cities returned the sentiment. The Athenian tendency to insist that difficult cities use democratic institutions for local government certainly suggests that the rulers assumed that poor subjects would be more cooperative than rich ones. Overall, though, the hand of the state apparently weighed more heavily on its subjects over time. After 431 both Sparta and Athens turned more often to violence to enforce their wills and punish noncooperators, and by 412 most of the subject cities were ready to rebel against Athens.

Syracuse's tyrants intervened heavy-handedly in their subject cities' affairs, removing entire communities to Syracuse or selling them into slavery, and redistributing their land to the regime's supporters. In the time of Dionysius II (reigned 367–357) we hear a lot about negotiations between the tyrant and the richest Sicilians. In its periods of democratic rule, by contrast, Syracuse seems barely to have intruded into the affairs of other Greek cities, although it did use force to make the Sicels pay taxes in the 440s–430s.

Systems of politics, adjudication, and enforcement clearly differed strongly among the multicity states. The democracy that Runciman emphasized is most evident *within* the ruling elites: strongly at Athens and in Syracuse in 465–405, somewhat at Sparta, and perhaps a little in tyrannical Syracuse. There was little (p. 290) democracy in the lives of women, slaves, and helots. Democracy was only unevenly extended to the subject cities: not at all under Syracuse's tyrants; less and less under Athens as the fifth century wore on; but, paradoxically, most of all under Sparta.

Military Power and Resource Extraction

The multicity states developed very distinct military systems. Sixth-century Sparta created an enormous hoplite army. Each contributing city funded its own contingent, and the army rarely campaigned far from home or for long periods. This required very little physical capital or organizational infrastructure.

The rise of naval warfare was a problem for Sparta. After the Athenian fleet played the main part in defeating Persia in 480–479, Sparta briefly took the lead at sea but its governance structures proved inadequate, and in 478 the allied cities rejected its leadership. Rather than insisting, which might have meant fighting Athens and would certainly have meant overhauling Spartan institutions to deepen state capacity, the ruling faction at Sparta left Athens dominant at sea.

When Sparta decided it had to fight Athens in 431, its leaders recognized the need for capital and naval power but struggled to generate them. Sparta did hire some mercenaries and establish a standing force of cavalry and archers (Thucydides 4.55, with van Wees 2004, 83–85, 238), but an attempt to raise cash, probably in 427, brought in a

bewildering mix of different kinds of coin as well as a payment in raisins (Meiggs and Lewis 1969, no. 67 = Fornara 1983, no. 132; Loomis 1992). Spartan efforts to get Corinth to supply a fleet in the 420s failed and Syracusan naval support after 412 was also disappointing, with the result that Sparta ended up depending on Persia. The admiral Lysander seems to have tried to shift Sparta toward Athenian-style resource extraction after 404, but King Agesilaos sidelined him and ended up formalizing the arrangement with Persia in 387/6. As Persian financial and naval support declined, Sparta lost control of Aegean affairs in the 370s.

Athens, by contrast, probably already needed regular seaborne grain imports by 500, which made state sea power both useful and (thanks to indirect taxes on the imports) possible. The great silver strike of 483/2 paid for the fleet that defeated Persia, but maintaining this required regular revenue and deeper organizational capacity. The naval alliance formed in 478/7, which committed many small cities in the Aegean to paying annual *phoros*, made this possible. Athens could never have created such an organization without widespread fear of Persia; but had Athens not led the Aegean toward a multicity state that could pay for a fleet, Persia might well have brought Greece into its empire after all in the 460s or 450s.

Athens continued paying for its own local government with traditional indirect taxes and state properties, but the subject cities' taxes paid most military costs. We do not know how the cities raised their *phoros* payments, but most likely it was by the normal means of revenues from state property plus customs, excise, and (p. 291) other indirect taxes on trade. If this is right, we can conclude that capital-intensive state formation only became possible when population, trade, and taxes started growing sharply toward the end of the sixth century.

At first *phoros* brought in somewhere around 500 talents of silver each year, augmented with perhaps as much again from indirect taxes and an unknown (but large) amount from plunder. A major naval campaign using 200 ships could cost 500 to 1,000 talents, and Plutarch (*Pericles* 11) says that Athens kept sixty ships at sea for eight months each year in the 440s, which must have cost 250 to 300 talents per year (Gabrielsen 1994). Nevertheless, reserves accumulated in the quiet years, and at one point the treasury held 9,700 talents—probably at least an order of magnitude more than any Greek state had previously managed. The historians Yuri Andreyev (1990) and Armin Eich (2005, 150–155) rightly speak of Athenian “Überakkumulation.”

As conflict ramped up, the reserve ran down. The siege of Samos in 440–439 cost either 1,200 or 1,400 talents; that of Potidaea in 431–430 cost 2,000 talents (Diodorus 12.28; Thucydides 2.70; Lewis 1984, no. 363). By 428 the treasury was almost empty, forcing the Athenians to levy a 200-talent tax on themselves (Thucydides 3.17, with Kallet-Marx 1993, 130–134). In 425 the Athenian assembly announced that “the *phoros* has become too little” and hiked it to somewhere between 1,460 and 1,500 talents (Lewis 1984, no. 71, lines 16–17), although Athens never actually received this much. Athens tightened collection procedures, sent ships to collect arrears, and between 433 and 423 borrowed

6,000 talents from the goddess Athena (Thucydides 2.69; 3.19; 4.60, 75; Lewis 1984: nos. 34, 52, 61, 68, 369, with Samons 2000). In all, the war against Sparta between 431 and 404 cost Athens between 35,000 and 47,500 talents (Andreades 1933, 222).

Syracuse could clearly raise enormous sums too. Herodotus (7.158) says that Gelon offered to supply 200 warships, 20,000 hoplites, 4,000 cavalry, and 4,000 light infantry against the Persians in 481, as well as feeding the whole Greek army. Diodorus (12.30) says that the democracy built 100 warships in 439 as well as doubling the number of its cavalry; and between 401 and 398, Dionysius I paid 60,000 men to rebuild the city's walls; constructed 160 new ship sheds; refitted 110 warships and built 200 more; funded the development of new kinds of warships, catapults, and siege towers; and hired tens of thousands of mercenaries (Diodorus 14.18–46). The following year he led 83,000 troops and 200 ships against the Punic city of Motya (Diodorus 14.47).

We know very little about the mechanics of Syracusan revenues. There were direct taxes on the Sicels (Diodorus 12.30) and a few passages might imply that some Greek cities were also taxed (e.g., Diodorus 14.106), but most of the stories that have reached us concern Dionysius's stratagems for tricking Syracusans out of their money ([Aristotle], *Economics* 2.2.20) and have a decidedly folktale quality to them.

Syracuse seems to have been much less financially developed than Athens, and it may have depended—like so many premodern states—on occasional large levies rather than systematic taxation. The deliberate depopulation of defeated (p. 292) Greek cities in the 480s–460s must have generated enormous plunder, and the victory over Carthage in 480 yielded even greater loot and captives plus a 2,000-talent indemnity (Diodorus 11.25–26). We can only guess at the total amounts, but Gelon and Hieron I may have been able to pay for their mercenaries in the 480s and 470s without a tax system like that of Athens. A naval victory over the Etruscans in 474 (Diodorus 11.51) may have been similarly lucrative, and though no source says so, we might wonder whether the slowing-down of plunder in the 460s had anything to do with the collapse of tyranny all across Sicily.

Dionysius I seems to have spent several years raising money for his great war against Carthage, resorting to tactics like selling the Greeks of Naxos and Catana into slavery (Diodorus 14.40), plundering Punic merchants (Diodorus 14.46), and, on his march across the island in 397, raising levies from the Greek cities (Diodorus 14.47). But after storming Motya, he was unable to field an army in 396, and Carthage besieged Syracuse itself. This would be very odd if Syracuse had a tax base like that of fifth-century Athens, but it is more explicable if it relied on plunder and occasional extraction of tribute. The huge forces that repulsed Athens' mighty armada in 413 similarly vanished, leaving Syracuse able to send only a few ships to the Aegean to seek revenge in 412–410; and Syracuse remained impotent as Carthage destroyed a string of Greek cities in 409–406. Later in the fourth century Agathocles could send a huge army against Carthage in 311, but when it was defeated he could not raise another; and after subduing much of Sicily in the 290s,

Greek Multicity States

Syracuse had to beg Pyrrhus of Epirus for help in the 280s. The boom-and-bust pattern, I suspect, reflects shallow state capacity.

The three most successful multicity states had very different ways of fighting and extracting resources, ranging from a naval, capital-intensive system with deep state capacity in Athens to an infantry-based, coercion-intensive system with shallow state capacity at Sparta, with Syracuse somewhere in between. We cannot conclude that any particular system of war making or resource extraction accounts for the failure of the classical multicity states. Sparta was backward by contemporary Mediterranean standards, while Athens was probably the most fiscally advanced state in the world. Yet Sparta (with Persian help) defeated Athens in 404, and no one could build another such capital-intensive system.

Economic Services

In spite of the complaints of classical authors about Greek poverty (e.g., Herodotus 5.49), recent research suggests that Greece was one of the handful of cases in premodern history that show what sociologist Jack Goldstone calls an “efflorescence”—“a relatively sharp, often unexpected upturn in significant demographic and economic indices, usually accompanied by political expansion and institution building and cultural synthesis and consolidation often seen by contemporaries (p. 293) or successors as ‘golden ages’ of creativity and accomplishments” (Goldstone 2002, 333). Between 800 and 300 the population of Greece probably increased tenfold, but instead of seeing incomes driven down to starvation levels, Greeks saw per capita consumption rise 25 to 50 percent, their total energy budgets growing from around 21,000 to at least 26,000 kilocalories per capita per day (Morris 2004, 2013, 66–80). Studies of stature, houses, urbanization, and real wages all suggest that fifth- and fourth-century Greece was one of the richest societies in the premodern world (Kron 2005; in progress; Hansen 2006b; Ober 2010; Scheidel 2010).

The contribution of the multicity states to this economic boom remains unclear. Athens’ capital-intensive route certainly provided many of the institutions that economic historians normally assume are crucial for growth, including peace, suppression of piracy, a stable coinage, large markets with low tariffs, uniform weights and measures, reasonably transparent laws, and strong property rights (Morris 2009b, 144–149). State redistribution of wealth through pay for rowing, jury service, and so on may also have helped to create effective demand among the middling sort (Ober 2010).

Sparta, by contrast, provided famously few economic services. Herodotus (6.86a) does tell a story set around 580 that property rights were more secure in Sparta than in Ionia, and the traditions that Sparta banned coined wealth altogether are probably untrue

(Hodkinson 2000, 154–179). But overall, little suggests that Spartan state formation facilitated economic growth.

In Sicily, economic growth seems to have occurred despite, rather than because of, the Syracusan multicity state. Diodorus twice (11.68, 72) links a rapid increase in prosperity in the 450s–440s to the fall of the tyrants' multicity state. When Dionysius I began rebuilding a multicity state, Diodorus adds (14.46), he robbed and drove off the Punic traders who had settled in Syracuse; and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics* (2.2.20), as part of a long list of expropriations carried out by Dionysius, mentions that he taxed animal husbandry so heavily that Syracusans abandoned the practice.

Despite these extreme differences between the multicity states' policies, the archaeological evidence shows no obvious regional differences in wealth. This might just mean that we need better archaeological data. Alternatively, if the archaeological data are giving us an accurate picture, we might conclude either that state policies had nothing to do with economic growth or that the benefits of one state's policies (presumably, Athens') spilled beyond its borders in a rising tide that lifted all the boats.

As the archaeological evidence improves we should be better placed to assess the relative power of explanations for Greek economic growth emphasizing demography (Scheidel 2004), geography (Morris 2004; 2010, 237–254), and institutions (Ober 2008; 2010). We may also be better placed to judge whether increasing wealth helped the multicity states (say, by increasing the amount of taxable revenue), hindered them (say, by empowering social groups that could resist state officeholders), or some combination of the two.

(p. 294) Belief Systems

One of the most remarkable things about the Greek multicity states is how rarely and weakly they appealed to the will of the gods to justify their rule. From China and Mesopotamia to Mesoamerica, and from the third millennium BCE through the second CE, rulers' pronouncements resound with claims to be carrying out the will of the gods, to be the kin of gods, or in the extreme case—Egypt—actually to be gods. Religion was probably the oldest and most widespread source of social power in the ancient world (Mann 1986; Trigger 2003; Morris 2010, 97–226).

The rulers of classical multicity states certainly did appeal to divine authority. Spartan kings, for instance, were also the state's top religious officials, and Herodotus is full of stories of Spartans exploiting beliefs to advance the state's ends (e.g., 1.67–68). Athens strenuously presented its multicity state as a religious organization honoring Athena (Smarczyk 1991), requiring the subject cities to send a cow and panoply each year for the Great Panathenaea festival and expensive refurbishing of the sanctuary on Delos

Greek Multicity States

(Thucydides 1.118; Plutarch, Nicias 3). As usual, the evidence is less clear for Syracuse, but the tyrants do seem to have taken on major priesthoods.

But by comparison with contemporary states in the Near East, these Greek efforts seem trivial. Assyrian kings claimed to feel compelled to make war to force their earthly rivals to recognize Ashur's supremacy in the heavens. They interpreted submission as a religious act, making rebellion an act of impiety that required extreme punishment (e.g., Kuhrt 1995, 505–519, and the inscriptions translated in Pritchard 1958, 188–201). Similarly, Persian kings represented themselves as part of an eternal struggle between the Truth and the Lie. Cyrus claimed that he was forced to take over Babylon in 539 because its god Marduk complained that the current ruler was neglecting him (*Cyrus Cylinder*, translated in Pritchard 1958, 206–208; cf. Briant 2002, 165–254; see chapter 7).

Athenian, Spartan, and Syracusan officeholders did none of these things. Thucydides' account of how the Athenians spoke to the Melians in 416 about the gods' attitude to their state would have shocked Persians or Assyrians (let alone Egyptians):

So far as the favor of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have. Our aims and our actions are perfectly consistent with the beliefs that men hold about the gods and with the principles that govern their own conduct. Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the gods are concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. (Thucydides 5.105)

A notion that humans were alienated from the divine realm, and could only transcend the physical world through rigorous self-cultivation, was common to (p. 295) first-millennium “axial age” thought all the way from China to the Mediterranean (Jaspers 1953; Bellah 2005; Morris 2010, 254–263), but the conclusion that no one had privileged access to the divine sphere was a distinctly Greek twist. It may have emerged in the eighth century, when archaeology reveals a rather abrupt separation between sacred and secular space (Morris 2009a, 75), and it gave rise to what I elsewhere call “the Greek Question”: How, if no one knows what the gods really want, can a community guide itself wisely? (Morris and Powell 2009).

It is not clear whether the difficulty of claiming divine authority inhibited state formation. The prominence of such claims in the premodern states certainly suggests that it might have done; but on the other hand, Rome built the greatest ancient empire without going much beyond Greek levels of sacred legitimation (cf. chapter 14).

Symbolic Integration and Identity

Greek Multicity States

None of the multicity states was very successful at building a corporate identity transcending local loyalties. Greeks regularly put local loyalties aside in the face of perceived existential threats, following Athens against Persia in 477, Sparta against Athens in 431, and Syracuse against Carthage in 398, but such shared interests were always short-lived.

The strongest basis for multicity identities seems to have been ethnicity. Greeks divided themselves into subgroups based on shared descent from mythical ancestors, buttressed by dialects and cult (Hall 1997). The most important of these were the Dorians and Ionians, and to a great extent the Spartan and Syracusan multicity states were groupings of Dorian Greeks and the Athenian version was a grouping of Ionians. The Athenian appeals to religious authority mentioned in the previous section were always appeals to specifically Ionian identity.

Each multicity state tried to reach out beyond its ethnic base to bring in other Greeks (e.g., Sparta's interventions in Athens in 510–507 and efforts to control Athens' Ionian former subject cities after 404; Syracuse's pressure on Ionian cities under each of the tyrants and in the 420s; Athens' invasions of Dorian Boeotia in the 450s–440s and 420s), but none was very successful. Yet even without bringing in large numbers of Dorians and other Greeks, if Athens had succeeded in creating a long-term Ionian multicity state around the shores of the Aegean, or had Sparta built a more integrated Dorian multicity state in the Peloponnese or Syracuse done the same thing in Sicily, these would have been major steps toward permanent multicity states. The reality was that not even Dorian or Ionian ethnic identity overcame particularism. In several parts of Greece, the political boundaries of fifth-century poleis roughly reflect material culture groupings going back beyond the eighth century (Coldstream 1983; cf. Morgan and Whitelaw 1991), and this long experience of small-scale identities seems to have made *autonomia* a cherished value (Ostwald 1982).

(p. 296) The cultural achievements of Athens and Syracuse do seem to have generated considerable “soft power” (cf. Nye 2004), a feeling among Greeks that these cities were admirable (celebrated most enthusiastically in the famous funeral oration that Thucydides [2.34–46] put in Pericles' mouth), but as in modern times, soft power did not necessarily translate into political power. Sparta's idiosyncratic institutions and military prowess exercised even greater fascination for some Greeks; but as Xenophon, one of Sparta's greatest fans, pointed out, “it is indeed most amazing that while all men praise [Sparta's] institutions, no polis chooses to copy them” (Xenophon, *Spartan Society* 10.8).

The ruling cities did win over some members of the local elites, best known from the *proxenoi* inscriptions (Walbank 1978; Marek 1984; Reiter 1991). These were men like Oiniades of Sciathos, who, according to a stele Athens erected in his honor in 408/7, “is loyal to the city of the Athenians and eager to do what service he can and helps Athenians who come to Sciathos” (Meiggs and Lewis 1969, no. 90, lines 7–13 = Fornara 1983, no. 160). Some of Athens' *proxenoi* exploited Athenian backing to dominate local democratic

Greek Multicity States

politics or advance their careers in other ways; some must have liked the honors and material rewards they received; and some presumably thought that working with Athens really was the best thing for their hometowns.

Multicity states could not have functioned without collaborators like these. We know little about Syracuse's *proxenoi*, but Sparta clearly had a network of friends. Xenophon's narrative has plenty of characters like Xenias, the wealthy Spartan *proxenos* in Elis (Xenophon, *Hellenika* 3.2.27; Pausanias 3.8.4), who in 397 tried to swing his city under Spartan control. According to a later report (Diogenes Laertius 2.51), Xenophon himself had been Sparta's *proxenos* in Athens.

The rulers of multicity states brought some of these friends into their inner circles (Herman 1987), and men like Pericles, Hieron, and Dionysius (I and II) were famous for surrounding themselves with intellectuals from other cities. Plato (who had an unhappy experience as one of Dionysius II's advisers) even joked in his dialog *Menexenus* that Pericles' mistress Aspasia of Miletus had written some of his speeches. Intellectuals were less welcome in Sparta, but kings such as Archidamus (reigned ca. 469–427) and Agesilaos (reigned 400–359) nevertheless accumulated non-Spartan entourages.

Yet no Greek multicity state had friends quite like Udjahorresne, a senior naval officer in Egypt who entered the Persians' service after their conquest of his homeland in 525. In the 510s he set up a long inscription detailing his service to Cambyses and Darius (Posener 1936, 1–36; translated in Lichtheim 1980, 36–41). Udjahorresne mentions near the end of the text that his new masters "gave me ornaments of gold and did for me every beneficence" (line 46), but his real concern, he says, was for the goddess Neith. Protecting her temple at Sais mattered more, he said, than loyalty to the native regime. No "friend" or *proxenos* in a Greek multicity state ever had the kind of clout that the Persians gave Udjahorresne.

Nor did Greek leaders get the kind of press that the author(s) of the later chapters of the biblical book of Isaiah gave the Persian king Cyrus after he restored the (p. 297) Jews to Jerusalem in 539 and ordered that their temple be rebuilt (Bedford 2001). The writer(s) proclaimed:

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue kings before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed: I will go before you
and level the mountains,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,
I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,

the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.

(Isaiah 45:1-3; translation from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*)

If the rulers of Greek multicity states were cautious about embracing individual collaborators from their subject cities, they were even more cautious about admitting entire communities into their own ranks. Archaic poleis had shown some flexibility about citizenship (colonial cities in Sicily had admitted new settlers from all over the Greek world, and Athens had granted the Plataeans citizenship in 519), but in classical times this became rarer. In truly dire emergencies poleis might make block grants of citizenship (e.g., Athens admitted the Samians to citizenship in 405 when on the verge of defeat by Sparta; Syracuse welcomed new settlers from Corinth in 345 when a Carthaginian conquest looked likely; Sparta enrolled 4,000 new citizens in 228 when its military power was evaporating), but in striking contrast to Rome, none tried to construct multicity citizenship or to integrate subject cities seriously into decision making.

Conclusion

So why did the classical Greek multicity states fail? Not, it seems, because they were too committed to either capital- or coercion-intensive strategies; between them, Athens, Syracuse, and Sparta covered the whole gamut, yet none succeeded.

Nor, I suspect, because they were too democratic. The tyrants who ruled Syracuse for more than half the time between 485 and 212 were as patrimonial as Near Eastern monarchs and perfectly ready to massacre, enslave, and/or deport their enemies (as, indeed, were Athens and Sparta after 431). Greeks liked to contrast the violence of Near Eastern rulers and the servility of those they ruled with their own restraint and freedom, but how accurately their stereotypes reflected (p. 298) reality and what that meant for state formation remain to be explored. Further, democracy was largely restricted to the internal deliberations of the male citizens who formed narrow ruling cliques in the capitals of multicity states. Except in the Spartan-dominated Peloponnese, there was little democracy between these central governments and their subject cities. Runciman's (1990) argument that Greek states were too democratic for their own good seems unable to account for the details.

Yet Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse clearly did share three peculiarities that perhaps distinguish them from other ancient Mediterranean state forms. One was their economic and demographic background. Per capita consumption probably increased 25 to 50 percent between 800 and 300 and population probably grew tenfold, meaning that the Greek economy may have expanded fifteen-fold across these five centuries. We lack comparable statistics for the Near East and Italy, but the evidence currently available suggests that while both regions saw economic growth during their most rapid phases of state formation, it was slower (Bedford 2007; Morel 2007). Possibly rapid growth strengthened Greek local communities more than central governments, undermining state formation.

Greek Multicity States

The strength of cultural particularism relative to the attractions that central governments offered to collaborators may have been a second shared peculiarity. There is no obvious metric for comparing Greek particularism with that in other regions, but Greek rulers do seem to have been relatively unwilling to share power with leading men in their subject cities or to open their own citizenship to subjects.

The third shared peculiarity is the weakness of religious legitimation. Leaders in Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse rarely even tried to persuade anyone that the gods wanted them to succeed, let alone that the fate of the cosmos hung on their victories. As noted above, religious legitimation was also rather weak in Rome, which went on to build the greatest of all ancient empires, suggesting that divine kingship or similar institutions were not necessary conditions for creating a multiethnic empire; but the weakness of religious authority—like the strength of particularism—may have acted as a brake on classical Greek state formation.

So did one or a combination of these peculiarities—rapid and decentralized economic growth, particularism, and weak religious authority—make the polis an evolutionary dead-end after all? I would suggest not. It is far from clear whether the Spartan coercive path or the Syracusan hybrid path was heading toward a stable, territorial state, but already by the mid-fifth century the Athenian capital-intensive path had created a fairly robust Ionian multicity state. Attempts to reach beyond this by invading Egypt and Dorian Boeotia led to severe military defeats in 454 and 447, but each time Athens retrenched and the Ionian core survived. The attack on Dorian Syracuse in 415 produced a failure that initially looked fatal, but by 406—despite Persia's entry into the war—Athens had once again clawed its way back, with Sparta offering peace terms that recognized Athenian domination over many of the Ionian cities. Only catastrophic human error, throwing away the fleet at Aegospotami in 405 with no prospect of being able to build another in time to avert starvation, finally undid the Greater Athenian State.

(p. 299) This battlefield defeat cut off the Athenian path of state formation, proving to be a turning point in Greek history because neither Athens nor any other polis revived it; and the reason for that was that there was just not enough time, because Greek state formation was merely part of a larger process of western Eurasian state formation. The Greeks lived in something of a power vacuum from 1200 until circa 580, when the Lydian empire moved against the Aegean coast. When Darius turned Persian attention seriously toward the Aegean around 520 the pressure intensified, setting off a process of rapid secondary state formation, in which Greeks modernized their own states to protect themselves from being forced into the larger Persian state. The victories over the Persians in 480–479 offered a unique opportunity to combine dozens of poleis into a taxpaying multicity state, and the Athenians seized this; but their own state formation set off vicious competition with Sparta and ultimately Syracuse, fueling further waves of secondary state formation in Carthage, Macedon, and Italy. After 410 the western Greeks faced relentless Carthaginian pressure, after 350 Macedon was a constant presence in the Aegean, and after 300 Rome gradually swallowed up all the Greeks. It was the combination of Athens' battlefield defeat in 405 and the lack of time for anyone to

reconstruct a capital-intensive multicity state before Philip of Macedon became the dominant player in Greek politics that prevented the rise of an enduring territorial state in the Aegean, and not any deep-seated Greek cultural, political, or sociological failing.

This conclusion (like any causal theory) necessarily rests on a counterfactual hypothesis, that had Athens avoided defeat in 405 it would have not only continued to avoid catastrophic defeat in the next few years but also succeeded in overcoming particularism to create a broader multicity identity. This counterfactual is of course ultimately untestable, but the events that did occur suggest that it is perfectly plausible.

First, had Athens not found itself without a fleet in 404, its fortunes would surely have revived when the Persian king Darius II died that year. In reality, the rivalry between his sons Cyrus and Artaxerxes set off a Persian civil war, and Cyrus—Sparta's great supporter—was killed in 399. If Athens had not fallen in 404 the split in the Persian elite would have been just as serious, as would the growing conflicts in the Spartan elite that led to Lysander being sidelined after 400, and those within the Spartan alliance that led to its breakdown in 395. Disaffection with Sparta would still have mounted, and *oligantropia*—the alarming reduction in the number of Spartans qualified to fight in the phalanx—would still have undermined Spartan power by the 370s. We will never know what would have happened had the Athenian admirals showed more sense at Aegospotami, but the survival of a reduced Greater Athenian State seems at least as plausible to me as its collapse.

Second, had a Greater Athenian State survived, there is every reason to suspect it would slowly have changed the institutions that obstructed a broader identity. After all, that is what happened in reality. In the late fourth century, Athenians decided that the kind of godlike king that worked so well for Near Eastern states was actually quite a good idea. When Alexander the Great demanded to be worshiped as (p. 300) a god in 324, it struck many Athenians as laughable, but by the time Demetrius the Besieger took the city in 307, Athenians were actually competing with one another to vote him divine honors. Rather than ask Delphi for an oracle, one Dromoclides suggested, they should just ask Demetrius (Plutarch, *Demetrius* 13). Nor did the boundaries around Athenian citizenship fare well: across the fourth and third centuries the assembly steadily enfranchised more and more non-Athenians (Osborne 1981–1983), and in 229 finally decided that citizenship should just be put up for sale. Had the Greater Athenian State avoided collapse in 404, I suggest, its institutions and ideologies would have evolved just as fast as those of the actual Athenian state in the fifth, fourth, and third centuries.

Classical Greece is the best-documented case on record of small city-states trying to turn into larger multicity states, and it should be of interest to any comparative historian of state formation. The comparative approach, though, also works in the opposite direction, and it is only by putting the classical Greek state into just the kind of comparative framework provided by this volume that we can hope to understand it.

References

- Andreades, A. M. 1933. *A history of Greek public finance*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA.
- Andrewes, A. 1966. "The government of classical Sparta." In E. Badian, ed., *Ancient society and institutions*, 1–20. Oxford.
- Andreyev, Y. 1990. "Ausserathenische Quellen der Reichtumsbildung Athens im 5./4. Jhs. v. u. Z." *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2: 115–175.
- Bedford, P. 2001. *Temple restoration in early Achaemenid Judah*. Leiden.
- . 2007. "The Persian Near East." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 302–329. Cambridge.
- Bellah, R. 2005. "What is axial about the axial age?" *Archives européennes de sociologie* 46: 69–87.
- Briant, P. 2002. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A history of the Persian empire*. Winona Lake, IN.
- Brock, R. 2009. "Did the Athenian Empire promote democracy?" In J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas, and R. Parker, eds., *Interpreting the Athenian empire*, 149–166. London.
- Cartledge, P. 1979. *Sparta and Lakonia*. London.
- . 1987. *Agesilaos and the crisis of Sparta*. London.
- . 2001. *Spartan reflections*. London.
- Coldstream, J. N. 1983. "The meaning of the regional styles in the eighth century bc." In Hägg, R., ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the eighth century bc*, 17–25. Stockholm.
- Consolo Langher, S. 1996. *Siracusa e la Sicilia greca*. Messina.
- . 2000. *Agatocle: Da capoparte a monarca fondatore di un regno tra Cartagine e i Diadochi*. Messina.
- De Angelis, F. 2000. "Estimating the agricultural base of Greek Sicily." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68: 111–148. (p. 301)
- . 2002. "Trade and agriculture at Megara Hyblaia." *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 21: 299–310.
- Ducat, J. 1990. *Les hilotes*. Paris.
- Eich, A. 2005. *Die politische Ökonomie des antiken Griechenlands (6.-3. Jhs. v. Chr.)*. Cologne.

- Feinman, G. and Marcus, J., eds. 1998. *Archaic states*. Santa Fe, NM.
- Fleck, R. and Hanssen, A. 2006. "The origins of democracy: A model with application to ancient Greece." *Journal of Law and Economics* 49: 115–146.
- Fornara, C. 1983. *Translated documents of Greece and Rome I: From the earliest times to the end of the Peloponnesian War*. 2nd ed. Cambridge.
- Funke, P., and Luraghi, N., eds. 2009. *The politics of ethnicity and the crisis of the Peloponnesian League*. Washington, DC.
- Gabrielsen, V. 1994. *Financing the Athenian fleet*. Baltimore.
- Goldstone, J. 2002. "Efflorescences and economic growth in world history." *Journal of World History* 13: 323–389.
- Griffeth, R., and Thomas, C. 1981. "Introduction." In R. Griffeth and C. Thomas, eds., *The city-state in five cultures*, xiii–xx. Santa Barbara, CA.
- Hall, J. 1997. *Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity*. Cambridge.
- Hansen, M. 1991. *The Athenian democracy*. Oxford.
- . 2006a. *Polis: An introduction to the ancient Greek city-state*. Oxford.
- . 2006b. *The shotgun method*. Columbia, MO.
- Hanson, V. D. 1989. *The Western way of war: Infantry battle in classical Greece*. New York.
- Harding, P. 1985. *Translated documents of Greece and Rome II: from the end of the Peloponnesian War to the battle of Ipsus*. Cambridge.
- Herman, G. 1987. *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city*. Cambridge.
- . 2008. *Morality and behaviour in democratic Athens: A social history*. Cambridge.
- Hodkinson, S. 1983. "Social order and the conflict of values in classical Sparta." *Chiron* 13: 241–265.
- . 2000. *Property and wealth in classical Sparta*. London.
- Hornblower, S., and Spawforth, A., eds. 1996. *The Oxford classical dictionary*. 3rd ed. Oxford.
- Hunter, V. 1994. *Policing Athens*. Princeton, NJ.
- Jackman, T. 2005. "Political communities in the Greek colonies and archaic and classical Sicily and southern Italy." PhD dissertation, Stanford University.

Jaspers, K. 1953. *The origins and goal of history*. New Haven, CT.

Kallet-Marx, L. 1993. *Money, expense, and naval power in Thucydides' History 1-5.24*. Berkeley.

Kron, G. 2005. "Anthropometry, physical anthropology, and the reconstruction of ancient health, nutrition and living standards." *Historia* 54: 68-83.

———. In progress. "The use of housing evidence as a possible index of social equality and prosperity in classical Greece and early industrial England."

Kuhrt, A. 1995. *The Ancient Near East*. 2 vols. London.

Lewis, D. 1984. *Inscriptiones Graecae I*. 3rd ed. Berlin.

Lichtheim, M. 1980. *Ancient Egyptian literature III: The late period*. Berkeley.

Loomis, W. 1992. *The Spartan war fund: IG V 1, 1 and a new fragment*. Stuttgart.

Low, P. 2007. *Interstate relations in classical Greece: Morality and power*. Cambridge.

Luraghi, N. 1994. *Tirannidi arcaiche in Sicilia e Magna Grecia*. Florence. (p. 302)

Luraghi, N., and Alcock, S., eds. 2003. *Helots and their masters in Laconia and Messenia: Histories, ideologies, structures*. Washington, DC.

Ma, J., Papazarkadas, N., and Parker, R., eds. 2009. *Interpreting the Athenian empire*. London.

Mann, M. 1986. *The sources of social power I: A history of power from the beginning to AD 1700*. Cambridge.

Marek, C. 1984. *Die Proxenie*. Munich.

Meiggs, R., and Lewis, D. 1969. *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions*. Oxford.

Morel, J.-P. 2007. "Early Rome and Italy." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 487-510. Cambridge.

Morgan, C. and Whitelaw, T. 1991. "Pots and politics: Ceramic evidence for the rise of the Argive state." *American Journal of Archaeology* 95: 79-108.

Morris, I. 1996. "The strong principle of equality and the archaic origins of Greek democracy." In Ober, J. and Hedrick, C., eds., *Demokratia*, 19-48. Princeton, NJ.

———. 2004. "Economic growth in ancient Greece." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160: 709-742.

- . 2006a. "The collapse and regeneration of complex societies in Greece, 1500–500 bc." In Schwartz, G. and Nichols, J., eds. *After collapse: The regeneration of complex societies*, 72–84. Tucson, AZ.
- . 2006b. "The growth of Greek cities in the first millennium bc." In G. Storey, ed., *Urbanism in the preindustrial world: Cross-cultural approaches*, 27–51. Tuscaloosa, AL.
- . 2007. "Early Iron Age Greece." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 211–241. Cambridge.
- . 2009a. "The eighth-century revolution." In K. Raaflaub and H. van Wees, eds., *A companion to archaic Greece*, 64–80. Malden, MA.
- . 2009b. "The Greater Athenian State (478–404 bc)." In Morris, I. and Scheidel, W., eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires*, 99–177. New York.
- . 2010. *Why the West rules—for now: The patterns of history, and what they reveal about the future*. New York.
- . 2013. *The measure of civilization: how social development determines the fate of nations*. Princeton, NJ.
- Morris, I. and Powell, B. 2009. *The Greeks: History, culture, and society*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Nafissi, M. 2009. "Sparta." In K. Raaflaub and H. van Wees, eds., *A companion to archaic Greece*, 117–137. Malden, MA.
- Nye, J. 2004. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York.
- Ober, J. 1989. *Mass and elite in democratic Athens*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2008. *Democracy and knowledge: Innovation and learning in classical Athens*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 2010. "Wealthy Hellas." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 140: 241–286.
- Osborne, M. 1981–83. *Naturalization in Athens*. 4 vols. Brussels.
- Ostwald, M. 1982. *Autonomia, its genesis and early history*. Chico, CA.
- Papazarkadas, N. 2009. "Epigraphy and the Athenian empire: Reshuffling the chronological cards." In J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas, and R. Parker, eds., *Interpreting the Athenian empire*, 67–88. London.
- Picard, O. 2001. "Le découverte des gisements du Laureion et les débuts de la chouette." *Revue belge de numismatique* 147: 1–10. (p. 303)

- Posener, G. 1936. *La première domination perse en Egypte*. Cairo.
- Pritchard, J. 1958. *The Ancient Near East I*. Princeton, NJ.
- Raaflaub, K. and van Wees, H., eds. 2009. *A companion to archaic Greece*. Malden, MA.
- Reiter, H. 1991. *Athen und die Poleis des delisch-attischen Seebundes: Die Proxenoï und Euergetai des attischen Demos*. Regensburg.
- Runciman, W. 1990. "Doomed to extinction: The polis as an evolutionary dead-end." In O. Murray and S. Price, eds., *The Greek city*, 347–367. Oxford.
- Ruschenbusch, E. 1985. "Die Zahl der griechischen Staaten und Arealgrösse und Bürgerzahl der 'Normalpolis.'" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 59: 253–263.
- Samons, L. 2000. *Empire of the owl: Athenian imperial finance*. Stuttgart.
- Scheidel, W. 2004. "Demographic and economic development in the ancient Mediterranean world." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160: 743–757.
- . 2010. "Real wages in ancient and medieval economies: Evidence for living standards from 1800 bce to 1300 CE." *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 53: 425–462.
- Scheidel, W., I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds. 2007. *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*. Cambridge.
- Smarczyk, B. 1991. *Untersuchungen zur Religionspolitik und politischen Propaganda Athens im delisch-attischen Seebund*. Munich.
- . 2003. *Timoleon und die Neugründung von Syrakus*. Göttingen.
- Snodgrass, A. 1980. *Archaic Greece: The age of experiment*. London.
- . 2006. *Archaeology and the emergence of Greece*. Edinburgh.
- Ste. Croix, G. de. 1954/55. "The character of the Athenian empire." *Historia* 3: 1–41.
- . 1972. *The origins of the Peloponnesian War*. London.
- Steinmetz, G. 1999. "Introduction: Culture and the state." In G. Steinmetz, ed., *State/culture: State formation after the cultural turn*, 1–49. Ithaca, NY.
- Tilly, C. 1975. "Reflections on the history of European state-making." In Tilly, C, ed., *The formation of national states in western Europe*, 3–83. Princeton, NJ.
- . 1992. *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1992*. Oxford.
- Tod, M. 1948. *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions II*. Oxford.

Greek Multicity States

Trigger, B. 2003. *Understanding early civilizations*. Cambridge.

van Wees, H. 1998. "Greeks bearing arms: The state, the leisure class, and the display of weapons in archaic Greece." In N. Fisher and H. van Wees, eds., *Archaic Greece*, 333–378. London.

———. 2004. *Greek warfare: myths and realities*. London.

Walbank, M. 1978. *Athenian proxenies of the fifth century*. Toronto.

Yoffee, N. 2005. *Myths of the archaic state*. Cambridge.

Ian Morris

Ian Morris is Willard Professor of Classics and Professor of History at Stanford University. He works on long-term global history.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The Greek *Koinon*

Emily Mackil

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Greek History, Social and Economic History, Greek and
Roman Law

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0012

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the *koinon*, a form of regional state in ancient Greece comprised of multiple poleis and in some instances other forms of community, and characterized by the division of sovereignty among the regional government and its constituent communities. It explains that the *koinon* was a remarkably widespread phenomenon and that almost of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese became part of a *koinon*. The chapter suggests that the *koinon* arose amidst a world of poleis against a background of strong group identities and that its nature was profoundly altered in the process of the Roman conquest of Greece in the second century.

Keywords: *koinon*, ancient Greece, multiple poleis, regional government, division of sovereignty, Greece, Peloponnese, group identities



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 11.1 *Koina* in Mainland Greece in the Fourth Century BCE

Between the individual, autonomous polis of ancient Greece and the broader world of poleis interacting with no formal structures of interstate governance lay a remarkable compromise between political centralization and decentralization: the *koinon* (pl. *koina*, literally, a “common thing”).¹ The Greek *koinon* was a form of regional state comprised of multiple poleis and in some instances other forms of community

(villages, population groups, etc.), characterized by the division of sovereignty among the regional government and its constituent communities, who influenced decision making by means of both representatives and direct participation and who met military and fiscal obligations in exchange for a set of privileges and advantages from the regional state. The *koinon* is distinct from military alliances (like the so-called Peloponnesian League), religious organizations (like the Delphic-Anthelic amphiktyony), and unitary poleis with local councils (like Athens with its demes), but it shares important features with each of these. The *koinon*, the Greeks’ most common term for this kind of state, is usually referred to in Anglophone scholarship as a federal state or league, but neither phrase accurately captures the entire set of practices that are exhibited by a *koinon* (cf. Walbank 1976–1977; Salmon 1994, 217). There are nevertheless significant points of comparison between the Greek *koinon* and modern federal states (for which the *koinon* served explicitly as a model in many cases), and issues and questions in the study of modern federalism that overlap with the study of the *koinon* will be addressed below. Even the Greek terminology for this form of state is tricky: it was sometimes called an *ethnos*, an even less specific term than *koinon*, and occasionally in the Hellenistic period it was known by the term *sympoliteia* (Beck 1997, 10–13; Siewert 2005, 19–20). But the Greek phrase that most accurately captures the nature of this form of state is *polyeides politeuma*, “a constitution of many kinds,” applied only once by Polybios of Megalopolis (23.12.8) to the Achaian *koinon*, of which he was a high-ranking citizen (Map 11.1). (p. 305)

The *koinon* was a remarkably widespread phenomenon, and the data published in the Copenhagen Polis Centre’s *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Hansen and Nielsen 2004) allow us to quantify its extent for the first time. In mainland Greece and the Peloponnese, eleven of the twenty regions recognized as distinct by the Greeks themselves and by modern historians were politicized, that is, they had a regional

government in the form of a *koinon*. In mainland Greece and the Peloponnese to 323 BCE, on a conservative reckoning, 183 of the 456 poleis (40%) were members of one *koinon* or another. If we were to expand the purview (p. 306) to include Asia Minor and the Hellenistic period, the numbers would increase further still. Yet even in the Hellenistic period, the *koinon* remains primarily a phenomenon of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese, probably because there were in this region a larger percentage of “small” poleis (with a territory of 100 km² or less) and fewer “large” ones (with a territory greater than 200 km²)—69.6 and 10.4 percent, respectively—compared to the poleis in the rest of the Greek world (where the figures are 51% small, 31% large). Small territory size translated in practice into military and economic vulnerability, both of which, as we shall see, the *koinon* was well designed to address. But territory size was not the only factor; the relative absence of the *koinon* from other parts of the Greek world is also to be explained in part by the presence of other kinds of sociocultural ties (e.g., between metropolis and settlement) and political obligations (e.g., to the Persian empire) that precluded it from being a viable option.

That nearly half of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese to the fourth century became part of a *koinon* indicates that the compromise solution it represented, between centralized and decentralized political organization, was widely desirable. Yet the evidence suggests that the compromise was difficult to accomplish. What follows is a survey, far from comprehensive, of the conditions that enabled the development of the *koinon* and of the pressures that threatened its viability, a consideration of what the *koinon* accomplished (which is a way of asking why it was worth trying and why it succeeded), and the institutional means by which it did so. I shall argue that the *koinon* developed gradually, through a combination of opportunity and necessity, as a profoundly practical solution to the limitations imposed by the narrow framework of the small polis in a world of nearly endemic warfare and highly localized, often scarce, resources.

Origins and Development

There has been little interest in charting the development of the *koinon*. Jakob Larsen, the most influential Anglophone historian of “Greek federal states,” simply asserted that they were the product of direct evolution from “tribal states” (e.g., Larsen 1968, xvi, 28). Yet the very concept is vague to the point of meaninglessness, and it is logically unnecessary for understanding the process of state formation (Service 1962, 99–132; Southall 1969; 1996; Fried 1975; Yoffee 2005, 8–21, 29 contra Sahlins 1961; 1968). If ancient historians still use the term “tribal state” to refer to the cluster of state-like activities undertaken by population groups in comparatively unurbanized areas of Greece, with no intended negative connotations of primitiveness (Parker 1998, 16), Catherine Morgan’s adoption of the term *ethnos* (pl., *ethne*) for these early regional states is a welcome development (Morgan 2003, 4–16). The Greek word means simply “group” and is applied to a broad range of referents from which it took its specific meanings; it is not an intrinsically

political concept, (p. 307) but many population groups were politicized and continued only to bear the label *ethnos*, often combined with the collective group name, such as the *ethnos* of the Thessalians. The other problem implicit in Larsen's model is that it obfuscates the very process of development. Evidence for interpolis cooperation, when not accompanied by evidence for any institutions of a *koinon* (e.g., magistrates, representatives, laws binding on the entire region, regulations governing military mustering or the payment of taxes), does not entail the existence of a *koinon*; it entails only cooperation, which is a logical early phase in the developmental trajectory of a regional state. It is important to attend to the institutional development of the *koinon* and the process by which it developed from loose groups of poleis that tended to cooperate, for a series of reasons, into a state structure supported by institutions that continued to evolve in response to needs and opportunities.

Common to many emergent *koina* in these periods was a sense among a series of geographically contiguous poleis and other communities of group identity, which was typically articulated in the form of descent from a common ancestor, the occupation of a shared territory, and the sharing of one or more sanctuaries. So the Ionians, descendants of the eponymous hero Ion (Hesiod, fragment 10a.23), inhabited twelve coastal poleis in a region of Asia Minor called Ionia, which they claimed to have occupied after being driven out of the northern Peloponnese by the Achaeans (Herodotus 1.145; Strabo 8.7.2). They also had a common shrine to Poseidon Helikonios on the Mykale peninsula, which they called the Panionion (Herodotus 1.148.1). The Boiotians claimed to have occupied their territory in central Greece after being driven out of Arne by the Thessalians sixty years after the fall of Troy (Thucydides 1.12.3), and they had several shared sanctuaries in the Archaic period, including that of Poseidon at Onchestos, which was not associated with any polis, and that of Apollo Ptoios at Akraiphia. The Achaeans, in the dedication of a monumental statue group to Zeus at Olympia in the second quarter of the fifth century, claimed to be the descendants of Pelops himself and, implicitly, of the Homeric Achaeans since the group depicted the heroes of the Trojan War drawing lots for the duel with Hektor (Pausanias 5.25.8–10; for the date Walter-Karydi 1987, 27–32). Inhabiting twelve communities (Herodotus 1.145), they had at least one common sanctuary, that of Poseidon at Helike (Mylonopoulos 2003, 35–40; Mylonopoulos 2006, 123–129). Each of these examples points to early interaction at a common sanctuary among the citizens of different poleis, who nonetheless regarded themselves as belonging to one *ethnos*. This sense of unity distinguishes such groups from other *amphiktyonies* (s., *amphiktyony*), organizations of multiple poleis and *ethne* that served no purpose but the administration of a shared sanctuary. The Delphic *amphiktyony*, for example, was comprised of twelve distinct *ethne* (Lefèvre 1998; Sánchez 2001), and the members of the Kalaureian *amphiktyony*, otherwise situated around the Saronic Gulf, included Boiotian Orchomenos (Strabo 8.6.14; *Inscriptiones Graecae* IV.842; Kelly 1966; Mylonopoulos 2003, 70–81; Mylonopoulos 2006, 129–136). As the wealth and prestige of such shared sanctuaries burgeoned, the responsibility of managing them fell upon those who used them and became a shared obligation. This need to manage shared sanctuaries (p. 308) certainly accounts for some of the impetus toward the creation of governing institutions beyond

the individual polis, but it is only one part of the story, the part that shows how closely community building verged toward state building. That other factors had to be present is shown by the negative case of the Dorian Pentapolis, the cluster of five Dorian poleis on and near the Knidian peninsula in Anatolia that had a common sanctuary of Triopian Apollo (Herodotus 1.144.1–3; Parker 1998, 20; Berges and Tuna 2001) but whose association never took a political form.

Beyond the sharing of religious rites, poleis that later became part of a *koinon* cooperated in military endeavors; indeed the threat of invasion or foreign domination was frequently the principal catalyst in the formation of political institutions that governed the entire region, where other underlying necessary conditions existed. This process is particularly clear in the case of Boiotia, a region comprised in the sixth century by twenty-six poleis of radically different sizes, Thebes being by far the largest. This disparity resulted in the absorption or subordination of some smaller poleis by larger ones, perhaps as early as the seventh century (e.g., Hesiod's Askra and Thespiiai; Tandy 1997, 205; Edwards 2004); whether this took an institutional form or was a de facto relationship is not clear. A series of weapons, inscribed and dedicated at Olympia by several Boiotian poleis, indicate that others fought to retain their independence or to jockey for a position of hegemony over others (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 11.1202, 1208; 15.245; 24.300). A fascinating passage of Herodotus (5.79.1–2) recording the events of 506 reveals that, despite the apparently complete lack of political institutions binding the Boiotian poleis together, they were in the habit of assisting one another in war so regularly that they appear to have been able to expect mutual military support. Shortly before, in 519, the Thebans had put pressure on Plataia “to contribute to the Boiotians” (Herodotus 6.108.2–5; Thucydides 3.68.4–5), and it is possible that the perceived urgency of uniting Boiotia in the late sixth century may have been a response to the rising power of Thessaly (Lehmann 1983), but certainty is impossible without a more fixed date for the battle of Keressos, which sources place variously in the early sixth and early fifth centuries (Plutarch, *Camillus* 19.4; *Moralia* 866d–7b). Thessalian hostility after the First Sacred War was a major factor in the development of the Phokian *koinon* (McInerney 1999, 156, 173–178). And one of the few things we can say about the Aitolians in the third quarter of the fifth century is that they cooperated spectacularly well to defend their territory against invasion (Thucydides 3.94–98, 100). If they had any political institutions that governed that process of cooperation, they appear not to have prevented individual Aitolian communities from making treaties with outsiders (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 26.461, 28.408; Pikoulas 2000–2003). The nature of these ties is well illustrated by Thucydides' brief account of the response of the Ozolian Lokrians to a Spartan demand for permission to march through their territory in 426 in order to make a retaliatory attack on Naupaktos, which had incited an Athenian attack on Aitolia: the Amphissaiaians, one of the largest of the Lokrian poleis, agreed to give hostages to the Spartans and allow them to pass through their territory, and then they “induced the rest [of the Lokrian poleis] to do the same for fear of the (p. 309) invading army” (Thucydides 3.101.2). In each case, active threat clarified the extent of vulnerability, and these small poleis

The Greek *Koinon*

realized that cooperation was their most likely route to survival and continued independence. But it took time for these cooperative practices to be strengthened, regularized, and protected by political institutions.

In addition to ethnic and religious ties and exogenous motivations for military cooperation, many of these small poleis were bound to each other by economic interactions and interdependence, which is best demonstrated for this period by the existence of “cooperative coinage,” coinage minted by multiple poleis on a common weight standard with at least one common type and sometimes a legend identifying both the minting polis and the larger group of poleis in which it participates (Mackil and van Alfen 2006). Such coinages were produced, for example, in Boiotia and Phokis from the late sixth century, and in Thessaly shortly after 479 (Psoma and Tsangari 2003 survey the evidence). Each of these has frequently been described as a federal coinage, despite the absence of other evidence for the institutions of a federal state in any of these regions at the time of their appearance. Rather, these coinages point to the development of monetary instruments to facilitate economic interactions between poleis, and they by no means require the existence of a fully developed federal state. Similar cooperative monetary arrangements are known for poleis that never joined a *koinon* and also for those that did but only well after the emergence of cooperative coinage. Examples of the former include the coinage minted jointly by Mytilene and Phokaia (Mackil and van Alfen 2006, 210–219), and of the latter the “Arkadikon” coinage of fifth-century Arkadia (Psoma 1997; 1999; 2001; cf. Morgan 2003, 84). Despite our lack of detailed evidence about patterns of trade between the poleis of these regions in the late Archaic and early Classical periods, the appearance of these coins in hoards suggests that they circulated primarily within the region in which they were minted, and rather more rarely beyond it. In addition to facilitating regional trade, such coinages would also have facilitated cooperative actions undertaken by groups of poleis, including military expeditions and joint building projects. There is almost certainly a financial connotation behind the Theban demand in 519 that the Plataians “contribute to the Boiotians” (Herodotus 6.108.5).

The Greek *koinon* had its origin in patterns of religious, military, and economic interaction among poleis that tended to regard themselves as belonging to the same *ethnos*. It represents one form taken by the politicization of ethnic groups, but it never supplanted ethnic identity; the two became recursively influential, and the fuzzy boundary between them is perhaps best illustrated by an early second-century decree in which the polis Orloanda was admitted to the Lykian *koinon* by being granted “*sympoliteia* of the *ethnos*” (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 18.570: lines 56–57). The poleis that joined a *koinon* were overwhelmingly small, as we have seen, and the fact that in most regions we first detect the emergence of state institutions to protect, regularize, and promote those patterns of interaction in the aftermath of exogenous shock suggests that their vulnerability as individual poleis contributed significantly to the formation of the regional state. The Boiotian (p. 310) experience of a decade of subjugation to the Athenian empire (457–446) almost certainly encouraged them to develop for the first time regional political institutions to formalize old habits of interaction and to protect against a repetition of their subordination by mandating, among other things, the participation of

every polis in all military endeavors undertaken by the Boiotians (Salmon 1994; Hansen 1995, 31–32). The successful revolt of the Chalkidic poleis from Athens in 432 was likewise probably followed by the creation of a regional state under the leadership of Olynthos, newly enlarged by synoikism (Psoma 2001, 189–209). But if a will to combat exogenous threats by military cooperation motivated the development of *koinon* institutions, endogenous challenges must equally have been a factor. Those challenges were twofold: the first was to negotiate the role to be played by the larger, stronger poleis in the regional state; and the second was to surmount the difficulty of economic survival in small poleis with small territories in the fragmented Mediterranean ecology, where resources were highly localized. I shall address each of these challenges in turn in the next two sections.

Coercion, Cooperation, and Negotiation

The overall strategy was to survive and flourish by creating a regional state that would encompass poleis with a (putative) kinship bond but that would not efface the institutions of those poleis that were so successful as instruments of local governance and social order. Not every small polis that participated in these regional networks of economic, military, and religious interaction, however, agreed with this overall strategy. It is sometimes argued that the *koinon* was an aggressive instrument for the subordination of small poleis, no less than imperial Athens in the fifth century or Sparta in the early fourth (e.g., Rizakis 1990, 109). The problem of how a central government, almost by definition more powerful than those of member states, can be prevented from usurping the power and confiscating the resources of those member states is a fundamental dilemma in the modern political theory and practice of federalism (Riker 1964; Weingast 1995; 2005). In antiquity, the use of overwhelming force by a leading polis in the name or interests of the *koinon* is well illustrated by the Theban attack on Plataia in 431 (Thucydides 2.2.1–6.4). Although a Boiotian polis, Plataia had been an ally of Athens since 519; only a few of its citizens preferred membership in the Boiotian *koinon* to Athenian alliance and these few invited the Thebans to make their surprise attack in 431. The Plataians, with only minor support from Athens, succumbed to siege four years later and the polis was destroyed (Thucydides 3.20–24, 52.1–68.5). Nor in the fourth century did the Thebans tolerate the refusal of Boiotian poleis to participate in the *koinon*: after having been restored to their city by the terms of the Peace of Antalkidas in 386 (Pausanias 9.1.4) the Plataians were expelled by the Thebans again in 373 (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.3.1–5; Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 25.8; (p. 311) Diodorus Siculus 15.46.4–6; Pausanias 9.1.8; Isocrates 14), and around the same time the Thespians must have resisted incorporation because their territory was pillaged and possibly depopulated (Diodorus Siculus 15.46.6, 51.3; cf. Isocrates 14.9). Similarly in 382, ambassadors from the poleis of Akanthos and Apollonia went to Sparta to appeal for help in resisting the expansion of the *koinon* of the Chalkideis under the leadership of Olynthos. The Akanthian ambassador, after describing the advances the Olynthians had made in subjugating a series of Macedonian poleis, made his own city's

situation quite clear: “The Olynthians have now sent to us and to the Apollonians and warned us that if we do not join their campaign, they will march against us” (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.13). He further mentioned poleis that had joined the *koinon* of the Chalkideis unwillingly, and declared that they would revolt at the first opportunity (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.18). In the violent early years of the Arkadian *koinon*, those cities that had joined attempted to compel recalcitrant Arkadian poleis to join by force (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.5.22, early 369). In 280 the Aitolians compelled Herakleia Trachinia to “contribute” (*syntelein*) to the *koinon* (Pausanias 10.20.9; Scholten 2000, 24).

These examples suffice to show that coercion was sometimes used to effect the participation of poleis in a *koinon*, but it would be wrong to extrapolate more broadly from them. In Boiotia in the second half of the fifth century member states were just that, poleis with political rights and obligations, not subjects of Thebes as they appear to have been from 379, when a Spartan garrison was expelled from Thebes, to 335 when the city was destroyed by Alexander. After that, the Boiotian *koinon* became a wholly more equitable state; members remained (and some became) members voluntarily, and not by force, even after the refoundation of Thebes by Kassander in 316. In the case of the *koinon* of the Chalkideis, coercion was employed only where incentives failed. Every citizen of a member polis of the *koinon* of the Chalkideis had the rights of *enktesis* (property ownership) and *epigamia* (intermarriage) in every other member polis (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.19). This meant in practice a far higher degree of economic mobility than could be enjoyed by the citizen of a single, completely autonomous polis. These rights were also among the incentives to join or remain part of the Boiotian (Roesch 1973), Achaian (Larsen 1971), Aitolian (*Inscriptiones Graecae* IX 1².1.3a, 8, 10b; Scholten 2000, 79; Scholten 2003), and Lykian (Larsen 1957) *koina* in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Another principal incentive to membership was the greater military security it afforded: a law of the Achaian *koinon* required that the army go to the assistance of any member polis being attacked, and ensured that if it failed to do so and a member polis was forced to hire mercenaries out of its own treasury, the *koinon* would reimburse those funds from the central treasury (Polybius 4.59.1–60.10). Whether similar legal pressures were in place or not, the Aitolians successfully cooperated to defend their entire territory against a Macedonian invasion in 322 (Diodorus Siculus 18.24.1–2; cf. 18.38.4–5, 19.74.6).

If the *koinon* was sometimes used as a mechanism for the subordination of small poleis, it more frequently (if less notoriously) served to promote and protect the cooperation of poleis and other communities within a region. Indeed, (p. 312) the *koinon* is, like modern federal states, characterized by a kind of lateral politics and the interdependence of part and whole. This is most dramatically illustrated by events in western Achaia in 219. An Aitolian force invaded and ravaged the territories of Dyme, Pharai, and Tritaia, the westernmost of the Achaian poleis. When a locally mustered force was defeated in its attempt to repel the invasion, the three poleis made a formal request for assistance from the Achaian *koinon*. Help was refused on the grounds that the *koinon* still owed money to its mercenaries and therefore could not hire another force; implicit is the fact that the full citizen levy was already deployed elsewhere. In response, Dyme, Pharai, and Tritaia

seceded from the *koinon* and refused to pay their taxes (*eisphora*, Polybius 4.59–60), suggesting that they paid them not as a form of rent to an exploitative centralized government but in exchange for military assistance whenever the need should arise. Secession weakened the *koinon* and created opportunities for its enemies, as Demosthenes purportedly saw in the case of Boiotia (Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 142). This important incident in western Achaia reveals a process of negotiation between polis and *koinon* under pressure; that it was a negotiation, and not a final rupture, is shown by the fact that the cities rejoined the *koinon* shortly after their revolt. The incident illustrates one of the main principles that some political scientists have argued contributes to constitutional stability in federal systems, namely, the ability of member states “to act in concert against potential abuses by the federal government” (Weingast 2005, 161). It also reveals an interdependence that would be entirely obscured if we were to regard the *koinon* primarily as an instrument of subordination.

Rights and Obligations: The Politics of Interdependence

As a political system emerges in which power is distributed across multiple scales, the challenge arises of accomplishing and maintaining an equitable and efficient distribution. The appropriate relationship between federal and state governments, in various realms, is perhaps the central problem of the political science and public economy literature on federalism. The basic principle of subsidiarity suggests that powers should be held by those most closely affected by the success or failure with which they are exercised, a principle that guides distributed authority systems like the *koinon* and modern federal states in the political as well as the economic realm.

The interdependence of polis and *koinon* is most evident in the constellation of rights and obligations they had to one another; the obligation of the *koinon* to protect its member communities is but one piece of this puzzle. In exchange for the surrender of partial sovereignty at the local level, poleis that became members of a (p. 313) *koinon* could influence its decisions by sending representatives to councils; by the attendance of their citizens at direct, regional assemblies; and by the election of their citizens to *koinon* magistracies.

The system of representation is best known for Boiotia circa 395, thanks to a justly famous passage from the Oxyrhynchus Historian (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 16.3–4 Bartoletti). Because the Boiotian poleis had radically different territory and population sizes, they were clustered together into a total of eleven districts for purposes of representation. The districts ranged in size from a single large city (Tanagra) to three medium-sized cities (e.g., Akraiphia, Kopai, and Chaironeia); the mammoth cluster of Thebes and its dependent poleis comprised four districts. Each district sent one Boiotarch and sixty councillors to Thebes, where the *koina synedria* (common assemblies) met; the

district was also responsible for paying a daily wage to its Boiotarch and councillors. Thebes, by the subordination of smaller communities (including Plataia), achieved a disproportionate degree of influence, but the other poleis were nonetheless represented in some relationship to their size. This system went back at least to 424 (Thucydides 4.91) and probably to circa 446. But from 379/8, when the Thebans expelled the Spartan garrison from their city, until 335 when the city was razed to the ground by Alexander, the Boiotian poleis were probably excluded from the college of Boiotarchs (Knoepfler 2000, contra Buckler 1979), the region's highest political and military magistrates, and perhaps even from attending the assembly (*damos* or *ekklesia*) that acted as the deliberative body in the same period. Unfortunately the evidence on both points is inconclusive. In any case the system described by the Oxyrhynchus Historian was clearly in place, with some changes, shortly after 335 (Corsten 1999, 27–60; Knoepfler 2000). The Boiotian use of districts to mediate relations between poleis and *koinon* necessitated significant cooperation among poleis that belonged to a single district, for they had to agree among themselves about whom to send as representatives as well as about how to pay them.

In fourth-century Achaia a regional council operated alongside the governments of the member poleis; our only evidence for this is a single fragmentary inscription (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 14.375), but it includes a list of names and several polis names, which may indicate representatives of these poleis at the council. Achaian citizenship was not just a salient concept but also a legal reality by 389 and could be bestowed *en bloc* on the inhabitants of newly incorporated communities (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.6.1). The exact nature of the governing bodies in the Hellenistic Achaian *koinon* is unclear, but in barest outlines we know that there was both a popular assembly (*ekklesia*) at the regional scale, attended by all citizen males of military age, and a regional council (*boule*) populated, almost certainly, by representatives of all member poleis (Polybius 2.37.10–11, 29.23–5; Walbank 1957–1979, 3:406–414 for a balanced discussion and references to earlier literature). A similar structure, of a large, primary military assembly operating alongside a smaller, representative council, governed Hellenistic Aitolia (Scholten 2000, 26–27). It is significant that in Aitolia and Achaia, where military assemblies governed along with representative councils, the highest elected magistrates of the *koinon* were generals (*strategoí*), pointing to war as one of the principal functions (p. 314) of the *koinon*. Indeed defense, described by political scientists as a “nonrivalrous public good,” is in theory best assigned to the central government rather than to individual member states; the need for it is regarded as a major centralizing force in the formation of federal states (McKinnon and Nechyba 1997, 6).

In exchange for the right of political participation (whether direct or by representation, or a combination of the two), every *koinon* demanded military service from its citizens. In early fourth-century Boiotia the levy of hoplites and cavalry was conducted on a territorial basis, utilizing the eleven districts we have already seen at work as instruments for representation. Each district provided a thousand hoplites and one hundred cavalrymen; significant numbers of light-armed troops are attested in the Boiotian army in the late fifth century (Thucydides 4.93.3) but by what mechanism they

were levied is unclear. In the Hellenistic period, the number of districts was reduced to seven or eight (Knoepfler 2000); poleis that were members of the same district reached agreements among themselves about how precisely to provide the troops for which they were jointly responsible to the army (Étienne and Roesch 1978). Training their troops was likewise the responsibility of each polis, but they were required by a law of the *koinon* to do so (Roesch 1971; Roesch 1982, 307–354). In Hellenistic Achaia and Aitolia the levies were not accomplished through districts but were more general, and because the assemblies there were comprised of men of military age, they became loci for strategic decision making (e.g., Polybius 4.7.10–11).

In addition to the fundamental exchange of military service for rights of political participation, the citizens of a *koinon* were bound to obey the laws of their own polis as well as of the *koinon*. So in 367/6 an Athenian embassy went to the Aitolian *koinon* to complain of the violation by two of its members of a sacred truce (Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 35); the clear implication is that the *koinon* had (or was assumed to have) full legal jurisdiction over the citizens of its member communities in external affairs. In late third-century Achaia, a board of twenty-four lawgivers (*nomographoi*) set down regulations for sacrifice at an important regional sanctuary and were more generally, we can assume, responsible for legislating matters of importance to the entire *koinon*; the members were representatives of their poleis (or in some cases perhaps of groups of poleis) but on what principle is unclear (*Inscriptiones Graecae* IV².1.73; Corsten 1999, 170–172). Evidence for *koinon* legislation is too patchy to determine the full legal sphere within which the *koinon* exercised its authority, but it is significant to note that it did not overlap with the legal jurisdiction of member poleis to govern their own internal affairs; we have, for example, a decree of Achaian Dyme in the early second century imposing the death sentence on several men who had produced counterfeit coins (*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* ³ 530; Thür and Stumpf 1989).

One of the most remarkable and innovative roles of the *koinon* in the legal sphere was to facilitate the arbitration of disputes between its own member communities; that federation is a powerful instrument for peace has been a central tenet of modern political theory since Kant (*Perpetual Peace* 356; Hayek 1948, 255–256). In a world where boundary and trade disputes, even between small poleis, (p. 315) could lead to war, the provision of arbitration by a neutral third party was a signal service, rendering the appeal to foreign judges, so common elsewhere in the Hellenistic period, unnecessary. It was only possible, however, where coercion to participate was effectively absent and cooperation took precedence over competition, as shown by the failure of the Boiotians to arbitrate in the dispute between Plataia and Thebes in 519 and again in 432. Virtually all of these interpolis disputes were over boundaries (Ager 1996, nos. 16–17 [Boiotia], 36 [Achaia], 56 [Aitolia]), but quarrels over other issues, like control of a priestly college for a shared cult (Ager 1996, no. 4 [Ionia]), are also attested. Occasionally a *koinon* appointed a member polis uninvolved in a dispute between other members to arbitrate (Ager 1996, 38 [Achaia]; 41, 55–56 [Aitolia]). The *koinon* became a significant instrument in

arbitration because member poleis recognized it as a political authority in which they themselves had a stake. These territorial disputes point, however, to another major function of the *koinon*: the protection and management of the regional economy.

Ecology, Economy, and the *Koinon*

The extreme ecological fragmentation of the Mediterranean results in a highly irregular and localized distribution of resources that is a principal characteristic of the region (Horden and Purcell 2000). Strategies of agriculture, storage, and exchange intended to mitigate the deleterious effects of localized scarcity and glut have been well studied by ancient economic historians (e.g., Garnsey 1988; Halstead and O'Shea 1989; Isager and Skydsgaard 1992). But the question of how this ecologically driven need for human mobility in the region interacted with the political realities of the ancient Greek world remains underexplored (Bresson 2000; Purcell 2005). Expanding the size of a single polis's territory was one strategy for gaining control of a greater array and extent of resources internally; at circa 2,500 square kilometers, Attica was by far the largest polis territory in the Greek world (Ober 2008, chap. 2), directly comparable in size to the entire territory of Boiotia, divided (theoretically) among some twenty-five poleis. But where expansion and centralization were impossible or undesirable, other strategies were developed to use political institutions to capture similar benefits, and the *koinon* was especially successful at doing so. Indeed Friedrich Hayek (1948, 255) reckoned the abolition of "impediments as to the movements of men, goods and capital between the states" along with the creation of a common monetary system as among the principal advantages of federalism.

The right of all citizens of member states to own property and intermarry throughout the entire territory of the *koinon* was extended for the first time in the early fourth century by the expanding *koinon* of the Chalkideis, as described above, and became a hallmark of *koinon* economies by the Hellenistic period. The economic incentives to membership offered by the *koinon* of the Chalkideis paralleled their own expansionist politics: the Akanthian ambassador, (p. 316) seeking Spartan help against them in 382, attributed their power to the possession of plentiful food and timber, and warned that they were actively seeking to incorporate the Thracians in order to gain control of the rich mines under Mt. Pangaion (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.16–7). Plentiful timber and lodes of precious metal were not, however, typical of the distribution of resources in mainland Greece and the Peloponnese. The third-century travel writer Herakleides Kretikos's *Description of the poleis in Greece* gives an impression of a more common situation: plentiful fish but wholly unproductive land in Anthedon, a small coastal polis of Boiotia, contrasts with nearby Tanagra, blessed with excellent vines and olive groves but still no grain lands (Pfister 1951, §8, 23–24). In mountain economies like those of Aitolia and Achaia, access to uplands and lowlands was vital for pastoralism, and in itself demanded cooperation among communities if their territories were small (Schmitt 1969, no. 456;

Chaniotis 1999), but there was little possibility of economic or political growth without access to the coast for trade. This probably lay behind the Aitolians' struggle to regain control of Naupaktos in 389 (Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.6.14) and their seizure of Akarnanian Oiniadai circa 335 (Plutarch, *Alexander* 49.15; Diodorus Siculus 18.8.6). The *koinon* thus used its centralized power to alleviate the pressures of highly localized resources by granting the citizens of all member states the right to own land and property anywhere within the *koinon*, enabling individuals to diversify their own production and distribution.

By the Hellenistic period, the *koinon* took on the role of protecting this system of fragmented resource distribution. In the early second century a severe grain shortage affected much of central Greece and the northern Peloponnese, and both the Achaian and Boiotian *koina* responded by imposing embargoes on the export of grain from the entire region (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 25.445 lines 15–16; 22.410 lines 5–6 with Migeotte 1984, 41–44). The *koinon*'s role as manager of the regional economy in the Hellenistic period was not limited to intervention in periods of crisis. We have evidence for the *koinon* handling taxation of imports and exports from all the ports under its sovereignty, and for controlling the revenues generated thereby. The *koinon* of the Chalkideis controlled "the income of revenues from many harbors, many ports" (Xenophon, *Hellenika* 5.2.16) according to the Akanthian ambassador to Sparta in 382, and he presumably meant that all taxes on import and export through every port that fell under the jurisdiction of the *koinon* went into its central treasury. That impression is confirmed by a roughly contemporary alliance between the *koinon* of the Chalkideis and Amyntas III of Macedon, which establishes terms for the import and export of goods between the two regions and requires payment of taxes by both parties (Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 12). In 352, when Philip II of Macedon saved the Thessalians in a battle against the Phokians during the Third Sacred War, the Thessalian *koinon* surrendered to him "all their taxes and revenues" (Justin, *Epitome* 11.3.2). In Boiotia from the mid-fifth century the *koinon* extracted taxes from its member poleis, the assessments of which were made according to some proportion of their population (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 16.4 Bartoletti); the practice continued throughout the Hellenistic period, alongside the poleis' own power to tax for local purposes (p. 317) (Feyel 1936, face B lines 26–27; cf. face A lines 5–6). Whether the tax paid to the Boiotian *koinon* by its member poleis was exceptional or regular is unclear; the term used, *eisphora* (*enphora* in the Boiotian dialect), frequently signals an exceptional levy raised to fund military activity. The same uncertainty prevails around the taxes levied by the Achaian *koinon*; when the western Achaian poleis of Dyme, Pharai, and Tritaia seceded in 219, they did so by refusing to pay their *eisphora* (Polybius 4.60.4), but because their secession was prompted by the failure of the *koinon* to defend their territory from attack, it would be reasonable for them to refuse to pay a tax (whether regular or exceptional), the revenues from which funded the Achaian army. The *koinon* was, it is implied, normally using its tax revenues for the public good of its members; the secession of these cities limited the *koinon*'s ability to become a rent-seeker simply to confiscate the wealth of its members under the guise of taxation (cf. Brennan and Buchanan 1980). Some political scientists

argue that this kind of internal competition, intrinsic to well-engineered federal institutions, is what makes federalism attractive in a market economy (Weingast 1995; McKinnon and Nechyba 1997; Weingast 2005).

The assignment to the *koinon* of the management of the regional economy and the collection of taxes on import and export as well as those collected for the funding of military activity would probably have been impossible without the additional responsibility for monetary production. We saw above that the production of a cooperative coinage was characteristic of early patterns of interaction between poleis that later became members of a single *koinon*. As the institutions of that state developed, the *koinon* typically played a major role in its monetary policy and production, but the extent of centralization and precise configurations of responsibility varied somewhat (Psoma and Tsangari 2003; Mackil and van Alfen 2006, 226–235). Overall, the economic powers and responsibilities of the Greek *koinon* outlined here match quite closely the profile of powers that political scientists and public economists agree are best assigned to the central government in modern federal states, because they affect the entire population (Oates 1972; McKinnon and Nechyba 1997). We should perhaps not be surprised that the *koinon*, as a compromise between complete polis autonomy (like Corinth in the Archaic and Classical periods) and a fully centralized state incorporating multiple communities stripped of most local jurisdiction (like Athens and Attica), was adopted as a political solution by nearly half of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese by the fourth century, and by even more in the Hellenistic period.

Legitimation, Identity, and Religious Practice

The compromise effected by the development of the *koinon* was, however, delicate, and both leaders and citizens sought to legitimate and reinforce it through (p. 318) religious practice. While member poleis retained jurisdiction over their own cults, the *koinon* sought to legitimate its power through ritual activity at one or several prominent regional sanctuaries. In several regions, cults of importance to the entire *koinon* either commemorated a major victory over an enemy, which crystallized the political salience of the worshiping group and contributed to the development of *koinon* institutions, or were associated with the ruling group's occupation of the territory. In Phokis a hard-won victory over the Thessalians in the late sixth century became the catalyst for the creation of regional political institutions, but there was a parallel religious response to the victory: the Phokians made dedications to Apollo at Abai (Herodotus 8.27.4–5, 8.33), and the sanctuary of Artemis Elaphebolia at Hyampolis became the site of a festival founded in celebration of it (Plutarch, *Moralia* 244b–d, 660d; Ellinger 1987; 1993; McInerney 1999, 60, 173–181). The cult of Athena Itonia at Boiotian Koroneia and the cult of Poseidon at Helike in Achaia were both associated with justifying territorial occupation. Athena Itonia was a Thessalian warrior goddess, and the Boiotians claimed at least from the fourth century to have founded her cult at Koroneia when they seized the area from Orchomenos

at the end of their migration from Thessaly (Thucydides 1.12.3; Strabo 9.2.29; Hekataios, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 1 F2; Armenidas, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 378 F1). The cult was well established by 446, when the battle of Koroneia, which resulted in a Boiotian victory and the end of a ten-year period of Athenian control, was fought on Itonia's doorstep (Plutarch, *Agesilaos* 19.1–2). Her role in securing that victory may be behind an apparent rise in regional interest in the cult in the mid-fifth century, and perhaps the myth itself that associated her with the conquest of the region. Several fragments of cultic poetry attest to the regional interest of the festival in this period (Bacchylides fragment 15 Maehler; Pindar fragment 94b.36–49), and it was probably shortly after 446 that the goddess received a new cult statue (Pausanias 9.34.1). The regional importance of the shrine became explicit in the Hellenistic period when it was the site of the significantly named Pamboiotia, a festival featuring equestrian competitions attested by the dedications of polis teams to their own polis deities in thanks for victories at Koroneia (*Inscriptiones Graecae* VII.3087; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 3.354–5). As a final example, the Achaians explained that they worshipped Poseidon at Helike because the Ionians, whom they expelled from the region, had done so before; in the early fourth century the Ionians appealed to the Achaians for some relics from the altar to transfer to their (comparatively) new cult of Poseidon Helikonios at Mykale in Asia Minor, and the narrative of the request and response make it clear that the Achaian *koinon* had at least nominal jurisdiction over the sanctuary, even if the citizens of Helike thought its management was their special concern (Strabo 8.7.2; Diodorus Siculus 15.48). That the city and its sanctuary were destroyed a few years later by an earthquake and tsunami was an irony not lost on ancient writers. Like the Boiotian cult at Koroneia, the Achaian cult at Helike legitimated the Achaians' right to inhabit and rule the territory they had (at least in myth) seized from another population group. For a *koinon* seeking to legitimate its rule over an extended territory of multiple poleis, there could be no more significant (p. 319) or effective choice. When it was destroyed the *koinon* shifted its religious attention to the sanctuary of Zeus Homa(gy)rios, "the gatherer," at Aigion.

There the Achaians held council meetings and elections, and deposited copies of *koinon* decrees from the fourth century onward (e.g., Liv. 38.30.1); there is no compelling evidence for its political use before the destruction of Helike (Plb. 2.39.6 is late and biased). This more explicitly political role for sanctuaries, as political meeting places and archives, is frequent in the Hellenistic period. In Aitolia the remarkable sanctuary of Apollo at Thermon was both a political meeting place (Ephoros *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 70 F 122; there is a bouleuterion on the site) and a repository for decrees of the *koinon*, but the latter role was assumed also by the sanctuary of Artemis at Kalydon (e.g., *Inscriptiones Graecae* IX 1².1.170, lines 3–4), pointing to the parallel needs to distribute information and to secure the support and protection of all the powerful deities within a *koinon*'s territory. This multipolar approach to legitimation and the capture of divine support is most notable in Hellenistic Boiotia, where the venerable sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos became the principal meeting place and archive of the *koinon*, but copies of *koinon* decrees were also erected at Koroneia, at the sanctuary

of Athena at Alalkomenai, and at the Amphiaraion of Oropos (again *Inscriptiones Graecae* IX 1².1.170, lines 4–6; Roesch 1982, 268–276). In its zeal to integrate the rich religious resources of Boiotia, the *koinon* even appointed special magistrates called “aphedriates” who appear to have acted as representatives of districts for the purposes of making dedications on behalf of the *koinon*. We have evidence of their dedications in the third century at four different sanctuaries in as many different poleis, none of which were the most politically salient sanctuaries outlined above (*Inscriptiones Graecae* VII.1672–3, 1795, 2723, 2724c–d, 3207; Roesch 1965, 135–141; Knoepfler 2000). Sanctuaries functioned as valuable resources for poleis seeking to legitimate their control of a territory (so Polignac 1995), and the same was true for *koina*. But the *koinon*’s distinctive distribution of power across multiple scales—the polis, the district, and the region—mandated a multipolar approach to ritual activity throughout the region that would both sustain and reflect its political arrangements.

Conclusion: A Constitution of Many Kinds

The nature of the *koinon* was profoundly altered in the process of the Roman conquest of Greece in the second century. Between 189, when the Aitolians surrendered to Rome their freedom to determine their own foreign policy and accepted a loss of some members and limitations on their ability to admit new ones, and 146 when Corinth was sacked and the Achaian *koinon* forcibly dismantled, the *koinon*’s powers were significantly circumscribed, limited now to local governance while the Romans determined foreign policy (Larsen 1968, 406–504; Schwertfeger 1974).

(p. 320) I have suggested that the *koinon* arose amid a world of poleis against a background of strong group identities that surpassed polis boundaries and were frequently reinforced and articulated in cultic terms; that the members of these groups interacted intensely with one another also for economic and military reasons; and that when the advantages of creating a state that would encompass those poleis and other communities that were part of this system began to crystallize, political institutions were developed by a complex process of coercion, cooperation, and negotiation. It was, as Polybios astutely realized, a “constitution of many kinds.” The developmental trajectory from *ethnos* to *koinon* that I have sketched above points to one of the ways in which the process of defining an ethnic identity influenced not just religious but also political and economic behavior. Political scientists and economists have argued that federalism promotes economic welfare by facilitating access to a greater array of resources, by creating a centralized monetary policy, and by promoting peace among larger groups of communities; they also argue that federalism has the potential to accomplish greater political equity than many other forms of state by being founded on a principle of intrinsic competition and constant negotiation. Most, if not all, of these features are manifest in most instances of the *koinon*; if these institutions contributed so significantly to the

welfare and equity of the societies they governed, that should go some way toward explaining why they encompassed nearly half of the mainland Greek world in the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

References

- Ager, S. 1996. *Interstate arbitrations in the Greek world, 337–90 BC*. Berkeley, CA.
- Beck, H. 1997. *Polis und Koinon: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Struktur der griechischen Bundesstaaten im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* Stuttgart.
- Berges, D., and N. Tuna. 2001. "Kult-, Wettkampf- und politische Versammlungsstätte: Das Triopion—Bundesheiligtum der dorischen Pentapolis." *Antike Welt* 32: 155–166.
- Brennan, G., and J. M. Buchanan. 1980. *The power to tax: Analytical foundations of a fiscal constitution*. Cambridge.
- Bresson, A. 2000. *La Citémarchande*. Bordeaux.
- Buckler, J. 1979. "The re-establishment of the Boiotarchia (378 BC)." *American Journal of Ancient History* 4: 50–64.
- Chaniotis, A., 1999. "Milking the mountains: Economic activities on the Cretan uplands in the Classical and Hellenistic period." In A. Chaniotis, ed., *From Minoan farmers to Roman traders: Sidelights on the economy of ancient Crete*, 181–220. Stuttgart.
- (p. 321) Corsten, T. 1999. *Von Stamm zum Bund: Gründung und territoriale Organisation griechischer Bundesstaaten*. Munich.
- Edwards, A. T. 2004. *Hesiod's Ascra*. Berkeley, CA.
- Ellinger, P. 1987. "Hyampolis et la sanctuaire d'Artémis Elaphebolos dans l'histoire, la légende et l'espace de la Phocide." *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 42: 88–99.
- . 1993. *Le légende nationale phocidienne: Artémis, les situations extrêmes et les recits de guerre d'anéantissement*. Paris.
- Étienne, R., and P. Roesch. 1978. "Convention militaire entre les cavaliers d'Orchomène et ceux de Chéronée." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hélienne* 102: 359–374.
- Feyel, M. 1936. "Études d'épigraphie béotienne." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hélienne* 60: 175–183, 389–415.
- Fried, M. H. 1975. *The notion of tribe*. Menlo Park, CA.
- Garnsey, P. 1988. *Famine and food supply in the Graeco-Roman world: Responses to risk and crisis*. Cambridge.

The Greek Koinon

- Halstead, P., and J. O'Shea, eds. 1989. *Bad year economics: Cultural responses to risk and uncertainty*. Cambridge.
- Hansen, M. H. 1995. "Boiotian poleis—a test case." In M. H. Hansen, ed., *Sources for the ancient Greek city-state*, 13–63. Copenhagen.
- Hansen, M. H., and T. H. Nielsen, eds. 2004. *An inventory of archaic and Classical poleis*. Oxford.
- Hayek, F. 1948. "The economic conditions of interstate federalism." In F. Hayek, ed., *Individualism and the economic order*, 255–272. Chicago.
- Horden, P., and N. Purcell. 2000. *The corrupting sea: A study of Mediterranean history*. Oxford.
- Isager, S., and J. E. Skydsgaard. 1992. *Ancient Greek agriculture: An introduction*. London.
- Kelly, T. 1966. "The Calaurian amphictyony." *American Journal of Archaeology* 70: 113–121.
- Knoepfler, D. 2000. "La loi de Daitôndas, les femmes de Thèbes et le collège des béotarques au IV^e et au III^e siècle avant J.-C." In P. A. Bernardini, ed., *Presenza e funzione della città di Tebe nella cultura greca*, 345–366. Pisa.
- Larsen, J. A. O. 1957. "Lycia and Greek federal citizenship." *Symbolae Osloenses* 33: 5–26.
- . 1968. *Greek federal states: Their institutions and history*. Oxford.
- . 1971. "The rights of cities within the Achaean confederacy." *Classical Philology* 66: 81–86.
- Lefèvre, F. 1998. *L'amphictionie pyléo-delphique: Histoire et institutions*. Paris.
- Lehmann, G. A. 1983. "Thessaliens Hegemonie über Mittelgriechenland im 6. Jhdt. v. Chr." *Boreas* 6: 35–43.
- Mackil, E., and P. van Alfen. 2006. "Cooperative coinage." In P. van Alfen, ed., *Agoranomia: Studies in money and exchange presented to John H. Kroll*, 201–246. New York.
- McInerney, J. 1999. *The folds of Parnassos: Land and ethnicity in ancient Phokis*. Austin, TX.
- McKinnon, R., and T. Nechyba., 1997. "Competition in federal systems: the role of political and financial constraints." In J. Ferejohn and B. R. Weingast, eds., *The new federalism: Can the states be trusted?*, 3–61. Stanford, CA.

Migeotte, L. 1984. *L'emprunt public dans les cités grecques: Recueil des documents et analyse critique*. Québec.

Morgan, C. 2003. *Early Greek states beyond the polis*. London.

(p. 322) Mylonopoulos, I. 2003. *Πελοπόννησος οἰκητήριον Ποσειδῶνος: Heiligtümer und Kulte des Poseidon auf der Peloponnes*. Liège.

———. 2006. "Von Helike nach Tainaron und von Kalaureia nach Samikon: Amphiktyonische Heiligtümer des Poseidon auf der Peloponnes." In K. Freitag, P. Funke, and M. Haake, eds., *Kult—Politik—Ethnos: Überregionale Heiligtümer im Spannungsfeld von Kult und Politik*, 121–156. Stuttgart.

Oates, W. 1972. *Fiscal federalism*. New York.

Ober, J. 2008. *Democracy and knowledge: Innovation and learning in Classical Athens*. Princeton, NJ.

Parker, R. 1998. "Cleomenes on the Acropolis: An inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on May 12, 1997." Oxford.

Pfister, F. 1951. *Die Reisebilder des Herakleides: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar mit einer Übersicht über die Geschichte der griechischen Volkskunde*. Vienna.

Pikoulas, Y. A. 2000–2003. "Λακεδαιμονίων συνθήκαι Αἰτολοῖς." *HOPOS* 14–16: 455–467.

Polignac, F. de 1995. *Cults, territory, and the origins of the Greek city-state*. Chicago.

Psoma, S. 1997. "Notes sur le début du monnayage fédéral des Chalcidiens de Thrace." *Revue Numismatique* 152: 423–428.

———. 1999. "Αρκαδικόν." *HOPOS* 13: 81–96.

———. 2001. *Olynthe et les Chalcidiens de Thrace: Études de numismatique et d'histoire*. Stuttgart.

Psoma, S., and D. Tsangari. 2003. "Monnaie commune et états fédéraux: La circulation des monnayages frappés par les états fédéraux du monde grec." In K. Buraselis and K. Zoumboulakis, eds., *The idea of European community in history, II: Aspects of connecting poleis and ethne in ancient Greece*, 111–142. Athens.

Purcell, N., 2005. "The ancient Mediterranean: the view from the customs house." In W. V. Harris, ed., *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, 200–234. Oxford.

Rhodes, P. J., and R. Osborne. 2003. *Greek historical inscriptions, 404–323 bc*. Oxford.

Riker, W. H. 1964. *Federalism: Origin, operation, significance*. Boston.

Rizakis, A. D. 1990. "La politeia dans les cités de la Confédération achéenne." *Tyche* 5: 109-134.

Roesch, P. 1965. *Thespies et la confédération béotienne*. Paris.

———. 1971. "Une loi fédérale béotienne sur la préparation militaire." In *Acta of the fifth congress of Greek and Latin epigraphy, Cambridge, 1967*, 81-88. Oxford.

———. 1973. "Pouvoir fédéral et vie économique des cités dans la Béotie hellénistique." In *Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik, München 1972*, 259-270. Munich.

———. 1982. *Études béotiennes*. Paris.

Sahlins, M. D. 1961. "Segmentary lineage: An organization of predatory expansion." *American Anthropologist* 63: 322-345.

———. 1968. *Tribesmen*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Salmon, P. 1994. "Le κοινὸν τῶν Βοιωτῶν." In L. Aigner-Foresti and A. Barzanò, eds., *Federazioni e federalismo nell'Europa antica*, 217-230. Milan.

Sánchez, P. 2001. *L'amphictionie des Pyles et de Delphes*. Stuttgart.

Schmitt, H. H. 1969. *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums*. Vol. 3. Munich.

Scholten, J. B. 2000. *The politics of plunder: The Aitolians and their koinon in the early Hellenistic era, 279-217 BC*. Berkeley, CA.

(p. 323) ———. 2003. "The internal structure of the Aitolian Union: A case study in ancient Greek sympoliteia." In K. Buraselis and K. Zoumboulakis, eds., *The idea of European community in history, II: Aspects of connecting poleis and ethne in ancient Greece*, 66-80. Athens.

Schwertfeger, T. 1974. *Der Achäische Bund von 146 bis 27 v. Chr.* Munich.

Service, E. R. 1962. *Primitive social organization: An evolutionary perspective*. New York.

Siewert, P. 2005. "Föderalismus in der griechischen Welt bis 338 v. Chr." In P. Siewert and L. Aigner-Foresti, eds., *Föderalismus in der griechischen und römischen Antike*, 17-42. Stuttgart.

Southall, A. W. 1969. "The illusion of tribe." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 5: 28-50.

———. 1996. "Tribes." In D. Levinson and M. Ember, eds., *Encyclopedia of cultural anthropology*, 1329-1336. New York.

Tandy, D. W. 1997. *Warriors into traders: The power of the market in early Greece*. Berkeley, CA.

Thür, G., and G. Stumpf., 1989. "Sechs Todesurteile und zwei plattierte Hemidrachmen aus Dyme: Zu Syll.3 530, Munzkabinette Athen Nr. 4046 und München, Dyme 12." *Tyche* 4: 171-183.

Walbank, F. W. 1957-1979. *A historical commentary on Polybius*. Oxford.

———. 1976-1977. "Were there Greek federal states?" *Scripta Classica Israelica* 3: 27-51.

Walter-Karydi, E. 1987. *Die Äginetische Bildhauerschule: Werke und schriftliche Quellen. II.2*. Mainz.

Weingast, B. 1995. "The economic role of political institutions: Market-preserving federalism and economic development." *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 11: 1-31.

———. 2005. "The performance and stability of federalism: An institutional perspective." In Ménard, C. and Shirley, M., eds., *Handbook of New Institutional Economics*, 149-172. Dordrecht.

Yoffee, N. 2005. *Myths of the archaic state: Evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations*. Cambridge.

Notes:

(1.) I am most grateful to Kathleen Frydl, Erich Gruen, Ronald Stroud, and Peter van Alfen for reading drafts of this chapter and suggesting improvements. This paper was completed in 2007 and does not take account of work published since then.

Emily Mackil

Emily Mackil is Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. A historian of the ancient Greek world, she has a special interest in issues of state formation and political economy.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Hellenistic Empires

John Ma

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Greek History, Social and Economic History, Greek and
Roman Law

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0013

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter, which explores the history of state formation in ancient Greece during the Hellenistic period, describes state power during this period and discusses the narrative, genealogy, and structure of the Hellenistic state. It explains the concepts of *basileia* and *basilikon*, and argues that the importance of the Hellenistic empires in the history of the ancient state is linked to several factors. These include the reemergence of a neo-near eastern landscape of kingly polities and the integration of the Greek world of the cities within this world.

Keywords: state formation, ancient Greece, Hellenistic period, Hellenistic state, *basileia*, *basilikon*, kingly polities

Herakles Kallinikos at Bisitun: State Power in the Hellenistic Period

In June 148 BCE, one Hyakinthos, son of Pantauchos, had an image of Herakles carved out, in the round, from the cliff at Bisitun, in modern Iran. Everything about this monument is instructive. The hero, named *Kallinikos* (“Triumphant”) in the accompanying inscription, is shown reclining and about to drink from a cup, having cast off his club, lion skin, and bow and quiver (all pictured in relief) (*I. Estremo Oriente* 274; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 223; Capdetrey 2007, 185–186). The inscription, in Greek, tells us that this monument was made as a dedication “for the safety of Kleomenes, the official in charge of the Upper Satrapies.” This religious monument is also a transaction between two members of the military-administrative structure of the Seleukid empire—that is, one

Hellenistic Empires

of the state formations that emerged in the decades after the conquest of the Achaemenid empire by Alexander and the subsequent breakup of that empire. These formations are the topic of this chapter, and, even if there were many forms of state in the Hellenistic world (city-states, federations), I will often refer to the Hellenistic empires as variants on the “Hellenistic state” par excellence—large supralocal political structures of control and extraction headed by a monarch and his power elite, sustained by violence, negotiation, and legitimacy. I will also refer to them as kingdoms or dynasties, according to the context.

The Bisitun text is in fact dated to “year 164, month of Panemos,” of the Seleukid era, a continuous reckoning of time from the moment when one of Alexander’s officers, the future Seleukos I, reconquered his power base of Babylonia in 312 BCE (Capdetrey 2010); the month belongs to the Macedonian calendar, used officially (p. 325) in the Seleukid kingdom (as in many other Hellenistic empires). In this text from Bisitun, time reflects power (Savalli-Lestrade 2010) by alluding to the founding of the empire and the ethnic identity of the dynasty, and space is constructed to the same effect. Kleomenes was the supergovernor of the provinces to the east of Babylonia (across modern Iran and Afghanistan): the geography of administration belongs to an imperial construction of space into provinces and commands. The dedicator of the monument, Pantauchos, probably fits within this geography as a local official, perhaps a commander of the military district (*phylake*) that Bisitun was located in, which included the plain of modern Kermanshah with its east-west road (Robert 1967). Media was militarized and controlled through colonies, which Polybios (10.27) assigns to Alexander already, “in order to protect the area against the surrounding barbarians.”

The monument and the text make visible a cultural history that directly reflects the nature of the Seleukid state. The names of the supergovernor, Kleomenes, and the dedicator, Hyakinthos, are Greek; the name of the dedicator’s father, Pantauchos, is typically Macedonian (or perhaps Thessalian) and reflects the Macedonian and northern Greek origin shared by many powerholders in the Hellenistic empires, traceable in prosopography and the onomastics. The language of the inscription is Greek, specifically the “common Greek” used in administration; the visual language of the monument, showing a banqueting Herakles under a tree, is also Greek, drawn from the Classical tropes of the votive relief as developed in Aegean lands. Herakles is a suitable recipient for the devotion of the Seleukid officers not only because of his association with sustained effort, protective violence, and apotropaic luck but also because of his Macedonian associations (Bernard 1980). The dedicatory text itself is carved on a relief representation of a pedimental stele, the free-standing rectangular stone slab that was one of the normal media for permanent monumental inscription. The monument, a dedication to Herakles, is also the image of the hero in a sacred space with dedications to him; the *mise en abyme*, by which the monument displays text and generally itself, in a self-conscious way, is characteristic of Greek self-aware cultures of public writing and images. The whole monument is a representation of the Greek identity of the power elite within one of the Hellenistic states. This identity is bound with the dynasty: the epithet given to Herakles in the dedicatory inscription, *Kallinikos*, though a traditional appellation of the hero, was

Hellenistic Empires

also used as an epithet for some of the Seleukid rulers, and the triumphant victory of the hero, celebrated in the religious monument set up by Hyakinthos, was also an echo or an evocation of the royal qualities of endurance, charisma, and military success.

The site of the Herakles monument, however, was not simply a point in the conceptual geography of empire developed by one of the post-Alexander Hellenistic states. The cliff face at Bisitun was the site of a far more grandiose monument, about one hundred meters away: the towering relief and trilingual inscription celebrating the deeds and royal virtues of one of the founding figures of the Achaemenid empire, Darius I. The monument, uniquely, gives a narrative, and hence a mythological story, of the accession of Darius; it also presents a canonical formulation (p. 326) of the central tenets of royal ideology, namely the association between kingship, divine favor, cosmic order, and imperial domination (see chapter 7). The monument, immensely visible, was clearly understood to represent imperial power—in the idiom of a past, now-vanished epoch. The importance of the whole mountain of Bisitun as a sacred landscape (Bagistane, the “mountain of the gods”) of great importance for the Persians is shown by Alexander’s visit in 324 (Diodorus 17.110; Bernard 1980). Hence the choice of the rock face at Bisitun for the monument set up by Hyakinthos son of Pantauchos not only reflected the importance of a strategic route within a militarized district but also inscribed the presence of the Seleukid empire within a long history of empires in the Near East. The tricky question is that of the nature of the relation between the Hellenistic state and the Achaemenid: convergence, appropriation, continuity, and rupture might all be read in the rock-cut Herakles monument (Briant 1994).

This monument, however, should not just be read retrospectively. The association between the mountain and Herakles reflects Greek (in combination with local, Iranian) religious conceptualizations of the landscape, which in turn left their mark, as shown by the description of first-century CE rituals venerating a bow-wielding, hard-riding Herakles roaming and hunting game on this very mountain (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.13; Bernard 1980). These rituals, which perhaps should be associated with the shrine at whose entrance the Herakles monument was set up, took place under the Parthian empire, the state formation that succeeded the Seleukids in controlling the land mass of Babylonia and Iran (see, again, chapter 7). Many features of the post-Achaemenid Seleukid world survived into the post-Seleukid Parthian empire, notably the use of Greek as a public language or the presence of Greeks as powerholders and privileged actors within the state—the same features that the Herakles monument at Bisitun exemplifies. The monument was surrounded by later Parthian dynastic monuments, a collocation that suggests some sense of continuity.

The world of Hyakinthos son of Pantauchos and Kleomenes is that of the Hellenistic empires that form the subject of this chapter. But the monument was set up at a moment when that world was vanishing (Derow 1989; Habicht 1989). In 148 BCE, the same year when Hyakinthos commissioned his Herakles, Macedonia had been reduced to provincial status by the Roman Republic, after the defeat of a rebellion led by one Andriskos, who claimed to be a descendant of the Antigonid dynasty; the dynasty itself, as well as the

kingdom of Macedonia, had been defeated by Rome and extinguished twenty years earlier. Kleomenes held the grand title of commander of the Upper Satrapies—but in 148 BCE these, strictly speaking, had long been lost, and the title is redolent of irredentism or imperial formalism. Baktria was an independent kingdom that broke away from the Seleukid empire roughly a hundred years earlier, and Parthia was the seat of an aggressively expansionary dynasty that would seize the Iranian provinces, including Media and Babylonia, soon after the dedication of the Herakles monument. The Seleukid state was itself weakened by dynastic strife and secessions in its Syrian heartland. The last strong ruler to reassert Seleukid state power, Antiochos VII, was defeated and killed in (p. 327) 129 BCE during an attempt to create the crucial equilibrium of the Seleukid empire by reestablishing control over Babylonia but also the Iranian territories seized by the Parthians (a rump Seleukid kingdom, based in northern Syria, endured until 63 BCE). One of the rivals of the Seleukid state, the Attalid kingdom, based in Asia Minor, became a Roman province a few years after the death of the last ruler in 133 BCE (and after an uprising led by one Aristonikos, who claimed to belong to the Attalid dynasty). Another great rival of the Seleukid empire was the Ptolemaic state, based on the Nile delta and valley as the successor to the pharaonic state in Egypt (above, chapter 2), but also at one point controlling extensive territories in Asia Minor, the Aegean, and even Thrace as well as Cyrene and Cyprus. By the second century, most of these possessions were lost to the Ptolemies. The last powerful Ptolemaic ruler, Ptolemy VI, died in 145 BCE (in battle, because of his involvement in the Seleukid dynastic strife), and the reign of his successor, Ptolemy VIII, saw the emergence or the exacerbation of elements of weakness in the structure of the Ptolemaic state: intradynastic strife, native rebellion and unrest, and increasing dependency on Rome. The latter feature weighed increasingly heavily on the Ptolemaic kingdom, culminating in the melodramatic story of the last Ptolemies (Ptolemy XII, Ptolemy XIII, and Kleopatra VII, the best-known Hellenistic monarch) and the annexation of Egypt by Rome under the future emperor Augustus.

In spite of some continuities (as between the Seleukid and the Parthian states, hinted at above, or in the case of the late Ptolemaic state), high politics changed irremediably with the exogenous shock of Roman Republican war making and hegemonic, profit-driven, power projection on the Hellenistic world); this change, in turn, radically affected state power, notably by creating conditions for dynastic strife combined with local recalcitrance and rebellion. All these phenomena marked a real change from earlier periods: they in fact explain the end of the world of interconnected Hellenistic empires, in a series of processes of degradation of state power which is in fact very instructive also for the mechanisms of state power in earlier periods (Ma 2000; Ehling 2008). The monument to Herakles Triumphant, set up at Bisitun by a Seleukid official at the eve of catastrophe, implicitly answers the question of how the system of Hellenistic states came to an end: there were mutually reinforcing processes of external pressure and internal crisis. But it also raises the question of how the world of the Hellenistic states came into being and what its genealogy and structure were.

The Hellenistic State: Narrative, Genealogy, Structure

One way of answering this latter question begins far away from Iran—in late Classical Macedonia, in the second half of the fourth century BCE (Cabanès 1996; (p. 328) Guimier-Sorbet, Hatzopoulos, and Morizot 2006; Lane Fox 2011). Under two energetic successive rulers of the Temenid dynasty, Philip II and Alexander III (Alexander the Great), the kingdom of Macedonia, based in the plain and foothills between the Haliakmon and Axios rivers but controlling various other neighboring areas, first consolidated and integrated its regional control into a coherent state structure. The Macedonian kingdom then outmaneuvered and outfought the old rival city-states in southern Greece (Athens, Thebes, Sparta; see I. Morris, chapter 10), which were more or less constrained within a system of constitutional, political, and indirect control. Finally, both Philip and, principally, Alexander, attacked and invaded the imperial space of the Achaemenid empire, starting at its western edge of Asia Minor in 336 BCE and working through all of its provinces to turn back when the para-Achaemenid areas of the Indus valley were reached. By Alexander's death in Babylonia in June 323 BCE, the actions of the Macedonian royal state and its followers had shifted the political map of the Classical world.

What followed redrew the political map even more radically (Will 1979–1982; Bosworth 2002). In the generation that followed Alexander's death (323–306 BCE), various local powerholders embedded themselves within provincial bases and, drawing on the financial resources of these local bases, engaged in a dizzying high politics of military and diplomatic confrontation, of remarkable ruthlessness and competitiveness that match anything imagined by modern fiction or fantasy. Astonishingly, the first stages of this Machiavellian high politics took place within a framework of legitimate (joint) rule by the two Temenid kings who had succeeded Alexander in ruling over an empire stretching from mainland Greece to the Upper Satrapies. These kings were in fact powerless—Philip III, Alexander's brother, was mentally deficient, and Alexander IV, Alexander's son, was a child—and they eventually lost their lives during the turmoil. The real successors of Alexander were those six players who maintained themselves in top positions of power and sovereignty in the political conflict, assuming the royal title shortly after the elimination of the Temenid dynasty (Mehl 1986; Billows 1990; Grainger 1990; Lund 1992; Franco 1993; Bresson 1995) : the sometime governor of Egypt, Ptolemy; the sometime governor of Babylonia, Seleukos; the sometime governor of Thrace, Lysimachos; Kassandros (whom it is actually difficult to classify in terms of positions held within the framework of legitimate administration; he was the son of the regent Antipatros, and gained control of Macedonia); the sometime “general of Asia,” Antigonos, and his son Demetrios who ruled over extensive, but unstable and variable possessions on both sides of the Aegean and in the Near East. A further process of pressures and competition led to the extinction of the realm of Antigonos and Demetrios (after various vicissitudes, notably

Hellenistic Empires

a striking comeback by Demetrios in Macedonia, where he eliminated Kassandros's son) and the end of Lysimachos's kingdom of Thrace (and of Lysimachos himself, killed in battle against Seleukos in 281 BCE).

The above account is a very simplified sketch of a very complicated (if utterly gripping) period, which was also followed by more confusion, caused by a Celtic invasion into Macedonia, Greece, and Asia Minor. Another factor of complexity (p. 329) was the way in which the various groups or dynasties in the power games of the early Hellenistic period were entwined by patterns of marriage (in one way or another, the house of the regent Antipatros provided brides for almost all of the competing players). By the 270s BCE, the main shape of the world of the Hellenistic kingdoms had emerged, with the three main dynasties (Tarn 1913; Will 1979–1982; Buraselis 1982; Hölbl 2001; Huss 2001)—the Ptolemies in Egypt (and ruling by sea over dominions including Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Asia Minor); the Seleukids, installed in a land empire covering Asia Minor, northern Syria, Babylonia, and the Upper Satrapies; and the Antigonids in the old Macedonian heartland—descended from the adventurous but ultimately unsuccessful Antigonos and Demetrios, and durably implanted by the dogged action of Demetrios's son, Antigonos Gonatas. These three main kingdoms were also paralleled by several smaller royal states, of which the most important was the Attalid kingdom, in Asia Minor, which broke away from Seleukid control. Similar states also emerged, out of a process of secession (Baktria, Armenia) or imitation and interaction, in Bithynia, Pontos, and Kappadokia (Faccella 2006; Coloru 2009; Michels 2009).

The result of the late Classical and early Hellenistic processes of violent state formation across the Aegean and the Near East was thus a system of competing and interacting kingdoms, for whom the major form of interaction was violent conflict over territorial control or political domination. The leitmotiv was one of violence and instability, rather than a “balance of power”; yet the kingdoms also constituted a system of peer polities that recognized each other as sovereign players with shared concerns and idioms. They also influenced each other, thus establishing the parameters and paradigms of political and cultural conduct that modern scholars term “Hellenistic kingship.” These homeostatic workings of peer-polity interaction are visible at the very beginning of the institution. The decision of Antigonos and Demetrios to call themselves sovereign “kings,” rather than continue the fiction of being governors within an unworkable post-Achaemenid unified state ruled from Macedonia, caused the chain reaction of Antigonos's competitors assuming the royal title in quick succession (Diodorus 20.53). The institutionalized nature of kingship, within a system of peers, can also be seen in the behavior of the Attalid ruler Eumenes II, when he escorted a Seleukid prince to the borders of his kingdom and invested him with the visible and recognized signs of kingship—the diadem (a cloth fillet worn about the head, the equivalent of the crown) and the purple cloak. The prince was the future Antiochos IV (by the time of whose accession, the Roman Republic had already established itself as an inescapable presence in the Hellenistic world).

Hellenistic Empires

This world was a new world: it emerged after the extinction of the Temenid dynasty in Macedonia and, on a larger scale, the destruction of the Achaemenid state. John Keegan entertainingly imagines, in a vivid piece of what-if history, the conquest of eighteenth-century Europe by an Alexander-like Scottish ruler, and old fortresses and cities occupied by “knock-kneed Scots braying for whiskey” (Keegan 1987). The historical reality of the post-Alexander Hellenistic world is scarcely less startling than Keegan’s reverie. The imposition of a Graeco-Macedonian ruling ethno-elite (the class that provided Hyakinthos son of Pantauchos, and Kleomenes (p. 330) the governor of the Upper Satrapies, evoked above) in charge of imperial state formations from the Aegean to the Oxus, as a unifying factor in a world that combined the Aegean spaces of Greece and the Near East, is a striking feature of the new constellation. Greek became the main official language of chancery, administration, and coinage across all the Hellenistic states. The complex mixture of Near Eastern languages used under the Achaemenid empire, especially the extensive use of Aramaic for correspondence and official inscriptions, came to an end. At a newly founded city on the edge of the Seleukid empire (Robert 1968; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993; Bernard 2011), known by the modern toponym “Ai-Khanum on the Amu Darya” (ancient Oxus) in northeast Afghanistan, the inhabitants used a gymnasium, whose Greekness is demonstrated by a herm inscribed to the traditional gods of the gymnasium, Hermes and Herakles; books on Greek philosophy (known by the trace left by the ink after the decomposition of the papyrus); and an inscription listing the “Delphic maxims” (short precepts embodying traditional morality), brought by a wandering Greek philosopher. The inscription was set up in the “precinct of Kineas,” no doubt the tomb of one of the founders of the city; his name is typically Thessalian (just as the name of Hyakinthos, the father of the dedicator of the Herakles monument at Bisitun, might have been Thessalian). More prosaically, Greek is also attested as a language of administration and accountancy at Ai-Khanum, written on storage vessels (Rapin 1992; Map 12.1).

The context for the use of administrative Greek at Ai-Khanum was the administration of the storerooms and workshops of a large palace complex. Both the processes of extraction and stocking, and the spaces within which these processes took place, are not typical of the Classical Greek world but belong to the Near Eastern states that the system of Hellenistic empires succeeded and imitated. The world of the Hellenistic empires is thus also an old world: it was founded on the takeover of the Achaemenid empire and its structures but also on its breakup, a historical shift that allowed the reemergence of an even older world, the world of the Near Eastern political powers that the swift rise of the Achaemenid empire had obliterated. A main characteristic of this world is the existence of an Egyptian state, not just sovereign but also aggressively expansionist, in competition with a main power based in Mesopotamia and northern Syria—a pattern that is well attested in the history of the ancient Near East.

Finally, the world of the Hellenistic empires is also an old world in that many of the local actors which the supralocal states dealt with were old, and they were long used to dealing with empires in processes including submission, negotiation, and resistance, covert or outright (communities that lacked such experience, such as the mainland Greek poleis of Athens or Sparta, had a difficult time). Such local communities include ancient,

Hellenistic Empires

highly articulate, and articulated urban communities like the Greek city-states of Asia Minor (Ma 2002) and the cities of Babylonia (Clancier 2007), or the Jewish community centered around the Temple at Jerusalem (see chapter 6).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 12.1 The Hellenistic World around 250 bce.

From the narrative sketch given above, four genealogical strands emerge clearly. The first is the Macedonian strand. At the most basic level, many of the Hellenistic dynasties were Macedonian in origin, as were many members of the ruling elites in the Hellenistic empires. Just as

importantly, the state that started [\(p. 331\)](#) [\(p. 332\)](#) the whole process of state formation in the Hellenistic world was the kingdom of Macedonia, and its characteristics left their mark on the states that emerged after the death of Alexander. These characteristics have emerged recently based on new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries (Hatzopoulos 1996; Hatzopoulos and Morizot 2006; Lane Fox 2011). Between the royal palace and the polis: the Macedonian kingdom, under the Temenids and the Antigonids, appears clearly as monarchical, aristocratic, civic, and national. It was a hereditary absolute monarchy, as exemplified by the enormous palaces known from the archaeological record at Aigai and Pella, and which were the scene of governance as well as of the stately consumption of the royal banquet. The monarchy relied on the collaboration of a landed aristocracy for courtiers, officers, and fighters (their lifestyle is known from the archaeology of their townhouses, their estate manors, and especially their tombs, spectacular for their construction, decoration, and grave goods, found across the Macedonian countryside). Recently, close study of the epigraphic material has shown that the political structure of the state integrated the Macedonian cities, organized as self-running communities but organically responsive to the central state's diktats, especially through uniformly present institutions such as the *epistates*, a locally chosen headman rather than a royally imposed governor. Finally, the Macedonian kingdom represented a national community, the free inhabitants of a territory (itself made up of subregions that had their own political institutions) endowed with a strong sense of identity, so that the ruler was the king "of the Macedonians," and the state in action was "the king and the Macedonians." This national character may have taken the form of institutional and customary brakes on royal initiative (which have led some scholars to speak of quasi-federal institutions; on the workings of regional institutionalized states, see above, chapter 11). Less formally, the king certainly drew legitimacy from his claim to represent and lead the Macedonians, especially in war.

Hellenistic Empires

All of these characteristics are of course visible in Macedonia itself, under the Antigonid dynasty—the irresistibly vivid, if biased, moralizing, and often scurrilously antimonarchical or savagely satirical narrative of Polybios, preserved in fragments or through Livy, gives a good sense of the workings of the late Antigonid state under its last two rulers, Philip V and Perseus (Ma 2011). Another example of a “national monarchy” combining monarchical leadership, aristocratic families, cities, and a strong regional identity is the Aiakid kingdom in Epeiros, a serious player in the high politics of the third century BCE; its developmental path in fact closely matches that of late Classical and Hellenistic Macedonia (Cabanès 1996). The Macedonian homeland influenced the states that emerged out of the complex formative stage (end of the Achaemenid empire, end of Alexander’s dominion, emergence of successor states): a detail such as the use of the Macedonian calendar in the Seleukid empire (as at Bisitun), Ptolemaic empire, and Attalid Asia Minor is a vivid trace of the Macedonian imprint. This imprint appears in the luxurious lifestyle and palace culture of the Ptolemaic and Seleukid dynasties (which were founded by Macedonian officers of Alexander, and whose members often explicitly identified themselves (p. 333) as Macedonians in international contexts), and the presence of a Macedonian ruling class in the Ptolemaic and especially the Seleukid states. The luxurious culture of Ptolemaic Alexandria, and generally of Ptolemaic Egypt, is vividly described in some literary sources, but even more vividly conveyed by the recent archaeological discoveries in Alexandria (*Alexandria and Alexandrianism* 1996; Association Paris musée 1998; Bagnall 2001). The Seleukid state was also structured by royally founded cities, which had Macedonian-style institutions (a council of elders known by the Macedonian name “Peliganes” and the *epistates* appear in northern Syria and in Babylonia). One of the Seleukid heartlands was northern Syria, thickly settled with royal cities on the Macedonian model but also a population of Macedonian colonists, which produced much of the state’s military manpower (Cohen 1995; 2006). The Hellenistic armies and, to a certain extent, the population of capital cities such as Alexandria or Antioch played the legitimizing and constraining role of the free male population of Macedonia proper (e.g., Polybios 15.25.11 for the army playing a role in acclaiming the new king in Ptolemaic Alexandria).

Imperium Macedonicum? Some later sources call the Seleukid empire “a Macedonian empire,” ruled by a Macedonian king at the head of “the Macedonians” (Edson 1958). Yet the Macedonian angle is not sufficient to understand the Hellenistic empires in their variety: the Attalid kingdom was not founded by Macedonians, and various traits of Attalid behavior (bellicosity, patronage) are structural (emerging by peer-polity pressures or by convergence) rather than Macedonian in origin (Thonemann forthcoming). Even the Antigonid kingdom was shaped by processes of interaction with other Hellenistic states as much as by continuity with the late Classical Temenid state. It is therefore just as crucial to bear in mind the second strand in the genealogy of the Hellenistic empires, namely the Achaemenid inheritance (Briant 1990; 1993; 1994; 2008; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993; Briant and Joannès 2007). Alexander, and the successor dynasts and kings took over the structures and strategies of administration, control, and interaction developed by the Achaemenid empire. After Alexander’s first victory over Achaemenid

forces (the satrapal army of local levies, Persian “barons,” and Greek mercenaries) at Granikos, he ordered the local populations of northwest Asia Minor to return to their settlements and their land, and to keep paying tribute as before (Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.17, with Briant 1993). Central to the workings of the Achaemenid entity were the presence of a “dominant ethno-class,” bound to the king by shared ethnic identity as well as self-interest and the combination of centralized bureaucracy, with remarkably flexible discourses of negotiation in dealing with local communities; these features are clearly visible in the Hellenistic states, and have been interpreted as signs of continuity between the Achaemenid and the Hellenistic. However, Alexander’s attempt at co-opting the Iranian imperial elites fell through after his death, and the elites in the new Hellenistic states would be Graeco-Macedonian; more generally the paradoxes in Alexander’s campaign (attempting to preserve Achaemenid structures while taking over the empire to the benefit of his own aristocratic and national conquest group: Aymard 1967, 51–72; (p. 334) Briant 1993) proved unsustainable, even if they deeply influenced the shape the post-Alexander states would take. There can be no question of complete, straight continuities: the Iranian heartlands of the Achaemenid empire (Elam, Persis where the administrative, political, and ideological capital cities were located) became provincial backwaters in the Seleukid empire (Wiesehöfer). As well as Achaemenid continuities, the history of the Hellenistic empires is also a record of simplifications, developments, and ruptures—or simply bricolage (Briant 1994; Briant and Joannès 2007; Tuplin 2009).

If the Seleukids and Ptolemies followed the Achaemenid practice of chameleon-like adaptability in dealing with diverse local constituencies (Greek cities, Phoenician cities, temple states like the one centered on the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem: Bickerman 1935; 1946–1948), their nature as locally embedded power-bases (outlined above) forced them to promote, very strongly, and to accept, local religious and social roles. This is the third strand in the genealogy of the Hellenistic state: the models offered by the pre-Achaemenid Near Eastern states. The Seleukids adopted religious forms of Near Eastern kingship, in Babylonia but also in Syria and Phoenicia (as shown clearly by a recently discovered letter of Seleukos IV, written in Greek but connecting royal piety with the subjects’ well-being: Cotton and Wörle 2007, Jones 2009). As is well known, the Ptolemies interacted with constituencies in Egypt, especially the temples and the priests, by presenting themselves, and behaving, according to traditional models of pharaonic rulership (on state and priest in Egypt, Manning 2010). This interaction is documented in public documents issued by the king as well as by the priests as a corporate body. The famous “Rosetta Stone” bears a priestly edict in Egyptian, in hieroglyphs and demotic, and in Greek, establishing honors for Ptolemy V in return for concessions and honors, but this is only one of a whole series of such priestly decrees (Crawford 1980; Huss 1994; Valbelle and Leclant 2000; Gorré 2009). The relation between Ptolemaic ruler and Egyptian constituencies is given visual form by a whole genre of royal portraiture in traditional hard-stone, Egyptian in style, and inscribed in Egyptian (Ashton 2001; Stanwick 2002).

Hellenistic Empires

Yet these portraits often combine Egyptian visual idiom with features that are meaningful only in Greek culture—for instance, the cornucopia, flowing locks, thunderbolt, or physiognomical realism. This is a reminder of the fourth strand making up the genealogy of the Hellenistic state: a shared Greek identity and culture. The ruling group in the Hellenistic states was not just made of Macedonians but also of Greeks. Greeks from the old city-states of Asia Minor participated in the great wave of city-foundations by the early Seleukids across their empire, or emigrated to Ptolemaic Egypt, Alexandria, or the countryside. The various kingdoms competed for the loyalty of the Greek cities, notably in Asia Minor (Ma 2002): by the last decade of the third century BCE, the cities were faced with the competing strategic offers and hegemonic claims of the Seleukid, Ptolemaic, Attalid, Antigonid, and Bithynian states. The kingdoms also competed more generally for recognition and distinction on a pan-Hellenic scene, for instance as civic or religious benefactors, or as defenders of Greeks and Greekness against a barbarian Other, the Galatian communities who moved into the Aegean and Asia Minor in the early 270s BCE before (p. 335) settling in Anatolia. Prestigious sites of Greekness such as Athens, Olympia, Delphi, or Delos, or simply Greek cities and shrines (for instance in Boiotia or in the islands), were showcases for competitive displays of Hellenism by the kings (Gauthier 1985; Bringmann and von Steuben 1995). This Aegean tropism of the Hellenistic states was both a reflection of the importance of Greekness in their genealogy and a parameter that shaped the nature and workings of these states. The various forms of interaction between the state and local elites in Babylonia and in Egypt, along the Near Eastern model, were also deeply and dynamically influenced by the Greek identity and cultural attitudes of the rulers.

Old worlds, new worlds: the Hellenistic age abounds in hybrid cultural effects and paradoxes (Ma 2008). These reflect the nature of the Hellenistic empires as tertiary formations, whose origins lie in the taking over and partitioning of a vast land empire that had absorbed earlier regional powers. The Macedonian dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleukids had to express their power and their status in forms acceptable to local constituencies in Egypt or in Babylonia, yet in ways that, more or less consciously, drew on their ethnic identity as members of the historical conquering elite of Macedonians (Ma 2003). These cultural effects are of course themselves ancient, and occur in a variety of contexts where to call them “pre-Hellenistic” is not to admit a Helleno-centric teleology (as sometimes claimed), but simply to note how the Hellenistic world, where scholars have recently noticed much hybridity, fits within long-lasting parameters.

The survey above has focused on the problems of continuity and rupture in the emergence of the Hellenistic states and also hinted at the impossibility of any simple solution to these problems (a statement such as “the Seleukid empire was heir to the Near Eastern empires, especially the Achaemenid” has by now a mostly heuristic or didactic value). Two important questions emerge. First, whether there exists a generic model or type for the Hellenistic state, as opposed to the catalog of specific traits to each of the various kingdoms (another way of posing this question is to wonder whether, e.g.,

the Ptolemaic realm or the Seleukid empire or the Attalid kingdom were “typical”). Secondly, whether we can usefully apply a colonial model, that is, a model of economic exploitation through state power to the benefit of an ethnic ruling group—or whether fixation on ethnicity and origins obscures the workings of the Hellenistic state.

Approaching *Basileia*: Institutions and Propositions

The *basileia*, Hellenistic kingdom, can be described as a bundle of institutions—in the traditional sense of formal organs, bodies, rules, and practices that structured state power in its most official manifestations. The model for this approach is the (p. 336) classic work by E. Bickerman, *Les Institutions des Séleucides* (1938), which combined a clear survey of institutions with a clear set of (often legalizing) propositions about the core principles of the Seleukid state, and a sense of the Hellenistic state as a multiplicity of bodies and constituencies, thus avoiding the formalist-royalist fallacy of focusing too much on the king and putting the king and kingship as the central problem (Bickerman 1938; Bilde 1996; Ma 2003; Virgilio 2003).

All the same, any description of the Hellenistic state must start with the heart of state power: “the king, his Friends, and the army,” as contemporary documents describe the passage of the Seleukid ruler. *L'état, c'est moi?* Who and what was the Hellenistic king? He appears in the sources under a variety of guises; essentially, as the main mover, decider, and doer in the state. In his correspondence, he emphasizes his convictions, character, and experiences as motivations for decision, and members of the royal power structure (such as a queen or an official) can claim to follow (or be described as following) the king's character. Decisions were followed by actions (especially leadership in war or gift-giving: see below)—or by words: the king's utterances were privileged, as performative by nature, and hence endowed with the fictional ability to change the world (Bertrand 1990; Ma 2000; 2002). Royal gifts and grants changed the modalities of state power but also local regulations; royal orders (often couched in terms of personal judgment or simply *bon plaisir*: “I think it right...”) determined the legitimacy of actions and set the processes of state in action.

Personal monarchy was of course an ideological construct, dependent on the collaboration of many for the ruler's will to be implemented. The first circle of collaborators was constituted by the king's Friends (Savalli-Lestrade 1998), as members of the royal court were called (the personal touch is characteristic of the nature of the Hellenistic kingdoms); the nature of the Friends as an institution is shown by the increasing formality and complexity of titles and ranks within the corps of royal courtiers (“Kinsmen,” “Bodyguards,” “First and Honored Friends”—the incorporation of the Friends into a court system is most visible in Ptolemaic usage, from the early second century onward: Mooren 1977). Chosen on personal criteria by the ruler, from traditional

elites (especially the Macedonian aristocracies or military elites) but also free-floating elements outside the kingdoms (mercenaries, philosophers, political exiles), the Friends constituted a defined group, which accompanied the king in his daily routine (some grew up with the royal princes as pages or foster-brothers) and lavish, stately lifestyle, served him, and notably advised him in the decision-making process that was central to the exercise of personal kingship (Weber 1997; Spawforth 2007; Ma 2011). When the Seleukid ruler Antiochos IV was ordered out of Egypt (which he had successfully invaded) by a Roman envoy, he asked to consult his Friends; the Roman, C. Popilius Laenas, famously drew a circle in the sand around the king and demanded an answer before he exited the trace (Livy 45.12)—a humiliating gesture in many ways, but also in the temporary severing of the king's vital links with a circle of confidants and advisers, the royal council, which, to a certain extent, was the center of Hellenistic state power. The importance of the court as the context for high-stakes decisions explains (p. 337) the periodically bloody conflicts within the court, between opposing factions of Friends, over policy but also simply status.

The third institution noticed by local descriptions of Hellenistic state power is the army, “the forces” (Bikerman 1938; Launey 1951 [1987]; Bar-Kochva 1976; Chaniotis 2005). Means of violence allowed the Hellenistic state to carry out its operations, that is, armed conflict with competitors and the surplus levying that financed the state (see below). The typical Hellenistic army (whose size varied according to the size of the kingdom that maintained it, but usually ranged in the tens of thousands) combined several elements: these can notably be seen in the account of the military parade organized by Antiochos IV in 167, in the suburb of Daphne near Antioch in Syria (Polybios 30.25). At the army's core lay a standing royal force made up of full-time maintained “Guards” or household units, crack bodies of heavy infantry and cavalry. These were conscripted for extended service from the royal settlements in the territory, notably the population of the Macedonian-style royal cities or military colonies, or the military settlers in estates on the countryside; veterans from this service were rewarded in cash and with privileges. In addition, in case of full-scale warfare, the state levied soldiers from the same constituencies for the line infantry of the phalanx (the massed, armored, and pike-armed formation that was one of the main components of the war-winning Macedonian way of war inaugurated by Philip II and Alexander the Great) and Macedonian-style cavalry regiments. The household units and Macedonian levies are yet another reflection of the Macedonian imprint; the system is well attested in Antigonid Macedonia (Hatzopoulos 2001), but also can be guessed at, with variants, in the other kingdoms. These types of contingents can be considered as “national” or even “citizen” armies, in that they mobilized members of communities that were full stakeholders in the Hellenistic state.

The “national” forces were supplemented by temporary levies from local populations (notably from Asia Minor and Iran, which supplied slingers and cavalry), thus reflecting the state's capacity to control and to extract (see below): this capacity and this function of the state is inherited from the Achaemenid empire. Furthermore, the Hellenistic empires employed, on a massive scale, mercenaries, often hired from Old Greece—especially specialist infantry and cavalry and experienced officers from the warlike midrange

Hellenistic Empires

Hellenistic states, namely the Aitolian Confederation and the Achaian League in the Peloponnese, and the small cities of Crete. Other mercenary troops could be non-Greek infantry (Thracians, Galatians). The royal army proper was completed by local troops, dispersed as garrisons at various points in the territory, at the service of the provincial governors and hence putting the means of violence at the disposal of local governance (on which see below). These provincial troops were liable to be concentrated within the royal army in case of major campaigns. The forces themselves reflected the diversity, complexity, and mixed heritage of the Hellenistic states, as well as the processes of the state. The account of the conflict (Fourth Syrian War) between the Ptolemaic and Seleukid state culminating in the huge battle at Rhaphia in 217, or the account of the battle of Magnesia (190) between the Seleukids and the Roman Republic (p. 338) (and its Attalid allies), illustrate all these aspects: the shock action of “core” royal forces, the constitution of armies expanded by frantic conscription and mercenary recruitment, the concentration of provincial resources; Macedonian war making, Greek specialists, native light infantry and exotica such as war elephants or even scythed chariots (Polybios 5.63–71, 79–86; Livy 37.37–44; Appian, *Syriake* 30–6). It is striking that at Rhaphia, the Ptolemaic state employed very large numbers of native Egyptian troops, which subsequently rebelled, inaugurating a sustained period of unrest in the countryside that troubled the state for most of the second century BCE: a good sign of how the native population was usually not integrated within the core elements of the state.

The kingdoms also maintained war fleets (as attested for the Ptolemies, Seleukids, Antigonids, Attalids, and the kingdom of Bithynia), often of ostentatiously large, artillery-equipped ships of the line; strategic materials (timber, pitch) and skilled naval personnel were at a premium. Though surprisingly little is known about the naval forces of the Hellenistic empires, it is likely that crews for these ships were mercenaries, recruited from coastal areas with naval traditions, such as Phoenicia or the Greek cities. The third-century Ptolemaic state deployed important permanent naval resources, which allowed it to control its overseas possessions, from a set of bases around the Aegean, notably on mainland Greece and in eastern Crete; perhaps more surprisingly, the Antigonid state (which commanded considerable resources in naval-grade timber) at times organized very effective naval efforts, which allowed it to compete on the international stage (notably with the Ptolemies), in the Aegean, and in Asia Minor. The Antigonid state also resorted to temporary alliances with pirates, subcontracting some of the hostilities to them, though such actors of violence of course do not belong to the central core of state means.

The king’s Friends accompanied the ruler and the troops; but not all Friends were to be found in their king’s entourage. Many courtiers, periodically or permanently, were sent out (or “left behind” by a peripatetic king) to high administrative office (they were thus the king’s Friends as a status rather than a function). This is the other major institution of state power in the Hellenistic period: the articulation of territory into structures of control, administration, and extraction (Bikerman 1938; Capdetrey 2007). The *basileia* was defined as a space, divided into provincial units (satrapies, using the old Achaemenid term, or, in Egypt, *nomes*) governed by “generals,” *strategoi* (the title is Greek, not the

Hellenistic Empires

Persian “satrap,” and military, reflecting the Macedonian genealogy studied above: Bengtson 1937–1952 with Aymard 1967, 461–473). These provinces were in turn divided into subunits (for instance, *hyparchies*; a local administrative center has turned up in the archaeological record at Kadesh, in modern Israel: the site was used in this capacity under the Achaemenids, the Ptolemies, and the Seleukids), and the hyparchies themselves were divided into another level of subunits (the military district in Media, around modern Nehavend and near Bisitun, was one such subunit; others bore the generic name *topoi*, “the places”); they were controlled militarily by the forces distributed locally that were mentioned earlier. The provinces could also be grouped within (p. 339) larger regional commands, following Achaemenid precedent—in the Seleukid empire, these were the satrapies in trans-Tauric Asia Minor, or the Upper Satrapies (attested in the inscription from Bisitun; earlier, this important high command was held by princes of the Seleukid house); at times, there may have been a head official (“the official in charge of affairs”) at the head of the whole administrative structure. This territorial model is best seen in the case of the Seleukid empire, but similar modes of organization operated in the Ptolemaic empire (in Egypt and in the vast overseas possessions), the Attalid kingdom, and in Antigonid-dominated Greece (where power was probably exercised along hegemonic lines rather than as direct control; nonetheless, the garrisoning of strategic points and the appointment of an official with power over the Peloponnese hints at some sort of articulation of mainland Greece according to Antigonid power).

In addition to military means, the provincial structure was also built around administrative institutions whose primary goal was economic and fiscal, namely the administration of the royal economy (Bikerman 1938; Préaux 1939; Aperghis 2004; Chankowski and Duyrat 2005; Capdetrey 2007; Manning 2010). Fiscal officials worked at the provincial and supraprovincial level: in the Seleukid empire, the high command of the Asia Minor provinces was paralleled by a high fiscal official over these provinces (a pattern also attested under Alexander), and there may have been a chief head official at the head of the economic administration (“the official in charge of revenues”). Under such high personages of state, the local officials, under rather bland titles such as *dioiketes* (administrator), *oikonomos* (manager, steward), or *eklogistes* (controller, accountant), went about the business of the royal economy, in collaboration with the military and administrative institutions in the provinces. The state apparatus levied rent, tribute, and taxation direct and indirect—in kind and in cash, though the exact details often escape us; at least, the Jewish sources as well as the Greek epigraphic material show the diversity, flexibility, and ubiquity of this taxation net. Proceeds needed stocking and administering; in addition, royal estates, goods, and perhaps even workshops needed direct managing (attested as an operation of great sophistication and depth in Ptolemaic Egypt); finally, officials managed the disbursement of goods and money under various headings of state or royal expenditure (see below). Fiscal administration generated a good deal of paperwork, some surviving in papyrologic or even epigraphic form, some attested only by official seals on perishable, now lost, documents. The presence of bureaucratic structures is one of the traits inherited from, or convergent with, the Near Eastern states and the Achaemenid empire that preceded the world of the Hellenistic

Hellenistic Empires

states. The operations of the administration of the royal economy is vividly illustrated by many documents in Ptolemaic Egypt (e.g., in the formal recommendations by a senior official to subordinates) or in the Seleukid empire (e.g., in a decree passed by a Karian city, Apollonia under Salbake, in honor of a garrison commander for helping the city in its dealings with a surprisingly well-informed and active economic administration, and specifically in a dispute over the revenues from the taxation of native villages: Ma 2002).

Administration and control; rent, tribute, and tax—the Hellenistic state was run by and for a ruling group—which was not quite an economic class of the wealthy, (p. 340) but rather a political elite of state's men at various socioeconomic levels. Apart from the king and his family, this group included the officials in the administrative and fiscal apparatus (and their families), and the manpower resources constituted by settlers and settlements. The royal Macedonian-style cities in the Seleukid empire (and also in Macedonia proper), or the Graeco-Macedonian *cleruchs* (military colonists) settled on estates throughout Ptolemaic Egypt, were closely associated with state power as stakeholders and beneficiaries. Broadly speaking, all these various members of the ruling group were maintained by the state—by rations or salaries, and mostly by the gift of revenue from royal land or, increasingly, by land grants of permanently alienated royal land, exploited by the powerholders for rent (mostly in cash), and thus allowing powerholders the possibility of direct access to agricultural surplus within state structures (the Hellenistic state is not feudal in nature). What is not in doubt is the wealth enjoyed by the ruling group in the Hellenistic states, as seen from the lavish lifestyle of the power elite, the estates of the Friends, but also the houses and high standard of living of the Graeco-Macedonian colonists and officials.

Who was actually subject to the operations of the Hellenistic state? The subjects fell into four categories, which affected the forms state power would take on the ground (Bikerman 1938; Capdetrey 2007). First, some regions were “royal land” in the sense of being directly owned by the king, who levied rent, in cash or in kind, off producers, or leased estates out (to individuals and perhaps also to communities), or alienated and permanently gave estates to Friends (it seems, along with villagers and serf cultivators). Second, some regions, without being under the king's ownership, belonged to the “king's land” in the sense of being under the state's close administrative control and part of the state's territory. This category is most visible in the case of Greek cities, for instance in Karia or Lykia, which were directly subject to the king, and followed the practice of dating by the royal calendar (which involved regnal years and the Macedonian calendar, but also eponymous priests, imposed by royal fiat). Most non-Greek cities, temple states and shrines, and a number of rural communities also belonged to this category, which one might call the *chora*, or “territory.” These communities all paid tribute and were subject to royal taxation, as well as being liable to services such as corvée labor and the garrisoning or billeting of troops. Third, some city-states, without belonging to the royal territory, were openly subordinate to the state's political control, and hence liable to the same manifestations of state power as communities in the royal territory: tribute, taxation, services, the stationing of troops. Unlike the subject communities in the previous category, the subordinate communities do not seem to be part of the royal

territory: they are not directly affected by royal edicts (though they do respond to royal orders or requests), and do not date with the regnal formula that appears officially on all legal documents within a royal state. Fourthly, the Hellenistic state controlled, in hegemonic fashion, various communities that were explicitly called “free and autonomous”: they proclaimed this liberty in very public forms (for instance on coinage), and in practical terms, they were not subject to tribute, taxation, services, garrisoning, or billeting. The free communities still (p. 341) may be considered as under royal control: They may have been bound by treaty obligations to supply military assistance against other imperial states, and, most importantly, their freedom was treated by the state as a status among others—dependent on the performative utterances by the king that characterized the royal state. The dynasts that occasionally appear as part of the kingdoms (Kobes 1996) may be considered as free communities in the ambit of a royal state (Maccabean Judaea is one example), though they also were co-opted by being granted functions and titles within the administrative structure of the state (as indeed happened to Jonathan and Simon Maccabee).

There is much that is problematic with the sketch of a typology of statuses as a description of the ruled in the Hellenistic state. Leaving aside the question of genericity and applicability (the model above is mostly visible in the Seleukid and Ptolemaic empires), the exact nature of the categories is unclear. The difference between royal land owned by the king and royal territory subject to the king, for instance, rests on difference in practice but not any formal difference in terminology; political power undergirded relations of ownership, and ownership is also a metaphor of the political control exercised by the royal state. Similarly, the difference between a subject city, within the royal territory, and a subordinate city, outside royal territory but still under political control, is difficult to grasp in theoretical terms. In Seleukid Karia, two neighboring cities, Amyzon and Herakleia under Latmos, fell into different categories (Ma 2002). Amyzon, a subject city, dated by royal formulas, received a royal official to administer its shrine of Artemis (which formed the nucleus of the city-state) and was closely supervised by a local governor in a nearby fortified place (where soldiers who had plundered Amyzon stored their loot). Herakleia, a subordinate city, did not date by royal formulas but by its own calendar, did not receive a governor or a garrison, and clearly stated that it did not belong to “the king’s land.” Import of royal grain into Herakleian territory was liable to customs dues, except that the Herakleians obtained the waiver of payment for a number of years—part of a package of privileges and exemptions negotiated by the Herakleians. It is clear that distinctions in status had real practical effect. The concrete implications of the diversity of statuses can be seen in the long-lasting complex situations around the Anatolian territorial dynasties (at Ptolemaic Telmessos or Seleukid Philomelion: Kobes 1996; Ma forthcoming) involving a variety of actors and statuses (dynasts, royal administration, shrines, villages, city-states).

This description of institutions undergirds the classic model of the Hellenistic royal state (Bikerman 1938). The model focuses on Hellenistic kingship. This is personal and charismatic, defined by military success: the kingdom is “spear-won,” to use the contemporary terminology, and victory grounds the legal claim to ownership of territory

Hellenistic Empires

and political control over local communities, as expressed in the supposedly monopolistic performative utterances that define a variety of local statuses: freedom from taxes, or freedom *tout court*, was a grant from the king. The kingdom is hence patrimonial in nature: administered as actual patrimony, or along metaphors of ownership, it produces rent and tax to the benefit of the (p. 342) king, his family, and his Friends. At the same time, the kingdom is centralized, bureaucratic (to manage the extraction of surplus on a large scale), and hierarchical (for practical but also ideological reasons, to articulate ruled territories into geographies of power and rule). The workings of administration are ideological as well as practical, in that they project an imagined empire that seems natural, extensive, and effective (Ma 2002; 2003).

The reason why such ideological operations are necessary lies in the messy reality of interaction and the resilience of local communities. The ruled deal with the administrative structure but also with the king directly; the supralocal empire must deal with a multitude of local actors, of which the Greek cities are a particularly delicate type. The apparently centralized empire thus negotiates with local communities to find locally acceptable forms of power, notably through gift-giving and concessions, in return for symbolical honors that dissimulate concrete submission. Negotiation and struggle take place within the field of shared discourse, which is not monopolized by the state. This is the context for the religious dimension of kingship: The ruler performed religious gestures (rituals or gifts) directed at local communities as manifestations of piety and professed concern for order (as in the case of Seleukos IV: above), and the local communities offered religious gestures, especially cultic ritual, in favor of, or even addressed to, the ruler, in the phenomena of the local ruler cult attested as honors offered by Greek cities (Habicht 1970; Price 1984). In turn, the state itself organized forms of centralized ruler cult, which framed local cultic manifestations, and hence co-opted them into the imagined empire produced by institutions; it also used metaphors or images of divinity as a way of expressing its power, as focused in the person of the king (Gauthier 1989; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993). This is especially visible in Ptolemaic Egypt, where the dynastic cult was launched as an initiative from the top, in the form of the deification of Arsinoe II after her death (Crawford 1980). For the kingdom, the aim is to create the conditions of power: the consent necessary for political support and, most importantly, the production of extractable surplus. The dialectical process between central authority and local autonomy is hence a crucial part of empire in the Hellenistic period, as it had earlier been under the Achaemenids (Briant 1996).

State Processes and Functions: Taking, Spending, Embedding

The classic model is useful, and produces fruitful readings of empire that avoid the twin pitfalls of seeing empire as merely unrestrained violence without any sense of legality, and conversely of seeing it as legalistically respectful of local liberties for their own sake. Furthermore, Bickerman's classic work shows that a description of institutions does not need to be static: it moves from the question "what was the (p. 343) Hellenistic state?" to "what was going on in a Hellenistic state?" The survey given above hence needs to be completed by an analysis of things done: processes and functions of the state.

The processes of administration and extraction, described above, allowed the state to carry out three core activities (in addition to directly supporting the existence of a whole class of powerholders, as outlined above): war making, conspicuous consumption, and gift-giving; it also generated a fourth activity, adjudication and regulation. The principal activity and the highest expenditure must have been war (Austin 1986; Chaniotis 2005)—starting with the maintenance of the military apparatus, by the distribution of rations during campaigns, but also by payment of military salaries and bonuses to the various elements of Hellenistic royal armies. War took the form of conquest and acquisition of territory and booty, of high political competition over territory and hegemony, and of tours of pacification. As sketched out above, conquest underlay the formation of the world of the Hellenistic states; violent competition formed the main forum of interaction, and the main force for unity, between the different states. Internally, military activity and success was an essential ideological component for the exercise and the legitimacy of kingship. More generally, warfare also united the state, in offering material benefits for powerholders, in mobilizing state resources, and in demonstrating state capabilities to the ruled: this is visible in the record of the largest states, but also of smaller kingdoms such as the Attalid kingdom or the Greco-Baktrian kingdom, frontier polities that proved extremely aggressive and acquisitive beyond the question of mere political survival. In 275 BCE a Babylonian scribe chronicled, among a series of astronomical observations, the passage of twenty war elephants, sent from the east to fight in the Seleukid west (in the war against Ptolemy II), a vivid demonstration of the extension and power of the Seleukid state to the inhabitants of one particular community, and no doubt all along the long march of the pachyderms; no wonder the war elephant was one of the official emblems of the Seleukid state.

The extraction of wealth in the form of rent, tribute, and taxation allowed the state to carry out further demonstrations of its power, in the form of conspicuous consumption and spectacle. Ceremonial could directly demonstrate military capacity, as could be seen in great parades such as that organized by Ptolemy II in Alexandria, probably at the celebration of the Ptolemaia at the successful (Seleukid elephants notwithstanding) end of a war against Antiochos I, or that held at Daphne, near Antioch in Syria, by Antiochos IV, as a statement of power after the humiliation in Egypt at the hands of a Roman envoy

(see above; Rice 1983). More generally, royal style, and its settings, drew on a variety of traditions (Macedonian, Achaemenid, Near Eastern, Egyptian), to present the image of a qualitatively superior life experience, as an image of inherent marvel and desirability. This sublimated the presence of subordination and rule into the unashamed celebration of royal luxury and consumption as a metaphor for superiority. This lifestyle was notably developed in deliberate, provocative contrast with traditional Greek civic protocols of restraint and egalitarianism, a relationship that is explored in a whole genre of royal anecdotes and apothegms. The “inimitable life” of the Hellenistic (p. 344) ruler is notably well documented in anecdotes concerning the last of the Ptolemies, Kleopatra VII, alongside her consort, Marc Antony (Plutarch). The political force of royal luxury was furthered by its being adopted by the members of the ruling group, in a move that proclaimed loyalty, universalized the state’s moral basis, and suggested the consequent superiority over nonmembers of the ruling group (Ma 2011). Royal art and high culture, notably literary, should also be considered as a part of conspicuous consumption by the state. In addition to making brute wealth visible, art and high culture fulfilled ideological functions: They could directly celebrate the military accomplishments and economic power of the dynasty (as in Ptolemaic or Antigonid court poetry of the third century) or express identity claims, especially in relation to prestigious Greekness (Hunter 2003). All these functions were performed as acts of competition between the dynasties, as well as demonstrations directed at constituencies within the states; they are particularly well documented in Ptolemaic Alexandria (Association Paris musée 1998).

One particular form that royal magnificence could take was gift-giving, which constitutes the third main heading of state expenditure. Some of this activity took place outside the kingdoms, in the form of gifts to prestigious sites of Greekness (see above) such as Athens, Delphi, Olympia, or Delos, or local shrines, or useful midrange powers such as Rhodes; such gift-giving was a demonstration of prestige, and hence also a means of competing with other dynasties. Most state giving took place within the state territories. The recipients could be individuals within or entering the state apparatus; the practice of gift-giving to high-ranking officials is paralleled by earlier practice, in the Near Eastern polities and especially the Achaemenid state, where members of the elite received land, income, and luxury goods from the Great King. Other recipients were subordinate communities, which benefited from gifts or subsidies, in cash or in kind, from the royal treasury. The epigraphic record shows that a major part of the interaction between Greek city and ruler was taken up by asking for such gifts, and reciprocating by symbolical honors (crowns, statues, or the cultic honors mentioned above as part of the religious culture of empire). Similar benefactions are attested in the case of the priestly community at Jerusalem, and it is likely that most shrines received benefactions and subsidies from the state, which explains the state’s interest in local shrines and its supervision of their finances and administration. Gift-giving was an essential part of the royal image, celebrated for instance in the third-century Greek court poetry of Theokritos (Hunter 2003); it was also closely linked to the nature of the state, in a number of instructive ways. Gift-giving reflected the assumption of authority, so that a concession, such as the exemption of taxation, could be presented as a gift on a par with a shipment of grain: the

personal generosity of the ruler was predicated on the power of the state. Apart from its ideological (celebratory or controlling) force, gift-giving also performed structural roles in the state: it provided an outlet for revenues in ways that bound and controlled individuals, ensured the collaboration of communities, and furthermore worked toward their administrative integration within circuits of extraction and distribution. In other words, gift-giving and dependency strengthened the state.

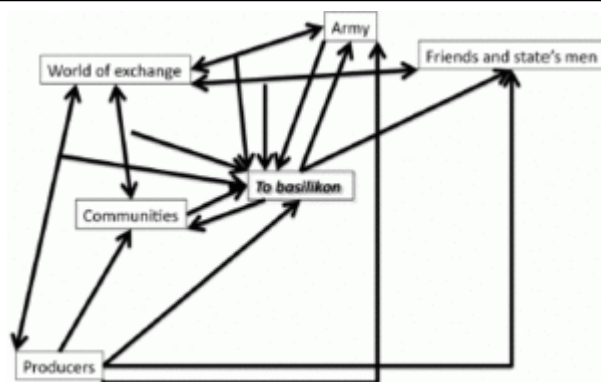
(p. 345) Apart from taking and spending (on war, luxury, and gifts), the state, by its control of performativeness (namely the legitimacy of speech with practical effects, such as orders or edicts), and its position as the ultimate holder of means of violence to enforce its will, found itself providing a whole range of services to the ruled, in terms of regulation, arbitration, and enforcement. At Uruk in Seleukid Babylonia, the official record office seems to have stored not just documents relating to the payment of indirect taxes to the state but also private documents, validated and archived in return for the payment of fees to the state (Rostovtzeff 1932; Wallenfels 2000). The collocation illustrates how the presence of power, in combination with administrative structures, enabled not just the state operations of revenue extraction and bureaucracy but also the provision of official legal services to local populations. Likewise, in the smaller kingdom of Kappadokia, a dispute between the city of Hanisa and a group of individuals over intestate property was formally adjudicated in Eusebeia, the royal capital, before a high official in the fiscal apparatus (*archidioiketes* or head administrator) and the governor of Hanisa. The state probably took an interest in such economic matters of land and property, as a potential beneficiary and as the recipient of tax revenue, but it also wielded the acknowledged authority and the power to enforce decisions (Robert 1963, 457–523). In Seleukid-held Hollow Syria, a petition by a great landowner, one Ptolemaios, requests that disputes within Ptolemaios's estate be judged by him, but admits that disputes between villagers on his estate and other villagers will be judged jointly by the local civilian administrator and the fiscal official, except for cases of murder, which will be judged by the governor of the satrap—not coincidentally the same Ptolemaios (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 48–50). Apart from judicial decisions (which do not seem to have accumulated with force of precedent), the king personally issued rescripts that had legal force across the state's territory. In the mid-second century, the Greek island of Aigina, an overseas possession of the Attalid state, archived such rescripts in its public records office, alongside civic decrees, as a source of law (Gauthier 1993). This is not to say that the king, or the apparatus of state, produced empire-wide legislation: local law and customs prevailed (this is visible in Egypt, Babylonia, and the Greek cities), the state intervening in disputes or producing edicts on particular matters of concern.

In addition to local adjudication and ad hoc quasi-legislation, one area of consistent regulation by the state was currency (Mørkholm 1991; Le Rider 1999–2000). The Hellenistic kingdoms struck coins in gold, silver, and bronze, marked with the king's name and usually, in the case of gold and silver, the king's face; the obverse bore motifs, often religious, linked with dynastic identity. A typical third-century Seleukid tetradrachm bore on one side the profile portrait of the king, physiognomically individualized and wearing a diadem, and on the other side a representation of Apollo, the ancestor of the

dynasty, in a fixed pose that did not change from reign to reign (sitting on the *omphalos* and holding an arrow), and the king's title and name in the genitive ("of King Antiochos"); various smaller marks and signs probably reflect processes of issuing and checking, and hence the production of the coin by the Seleukid administration. Currency could be managed differently from (p. 346) state to state—the Ptolemies enforced exclusive use of their currency, on its specific weight within their empire; the Seleukids minted currency on the widespread Attic standard and all coinage on this standard circulated as valid within their empire. What currency clearly reflects is the presence of the state—made visible in the form of the king's face and the king's name, but also implicitly in the validity (or not) of the coin in the marketplace after it had been issued by the state and used by the state for the payments that enabled the operations outlined above (war, consumption, gifts). Performativeness, administrative capacities, and the consequent power to regulate transactions across large-scale territorial units characterize the Hellenistic state. These capacities were consequences of the central aims and means of the state, but crucially also fed back into the processes of state power by embedding the state at crucial junctures within local life.

Interactions, Dynamics, and Stability: The Economic History of the Hellenistic Empires

Even the portrayal of state processes does not escape the risk of giving a static picture: it simply describes what state institutions do. It is important to see these processes as part of a system of interactions, especially economic, between the various institutionalized bodies within the Hellenistic state, and between the processes of extraction, distribution, and expenditure enabled by state regulation (Rostovtzeff 1941; Aperghis 2004; Duyrat and Picard 2005; Archibald, Davies, and Gabrielsen 2011). The relation between producers, extraction, expenditure, and feedback can be represented as a diagram (see fig. 12.1) that charts interactions within a territorial state: the outside is present only as the forces that justify expenditure (namely the provision of state capacity for competition with rivals) and as the catchall category of "exchange," which stands in for the underlying Hellenistic economy of profit-generating trade, both in regional contexts (notably in the Aegean) and in transregional arterial routes (from the Black Sea to Egypt, from Asia Minor to northern Greece, from Asia Minor to northern Syria, from northern Syria to Babylonia, and from Babylonia to the Upper Satrapies or to the Arabic Gulf).



[Click to view larger](#)

Fig. 12.1 The tributary and economic flows of Hellenistic empires

The relations shown are the following. The state took from producers and communities; spent on the army, Friends, and luxury, either directly or by channeling income from producers and communities to them. The state also gave back some of its income to the communities, as gifts or grants. The army, a

recipient of state expenditure, could produce income for the state in the form of predation and booty. Finally, the state itself, and the various king's men, were all involved in market transactions, as were the producers and the communities (these processes were also taxed by the state, notably thanks to its control of harbors). A number of features (p. 347) are immediately obvious. The state is the recipient of multiple channels of income, which it must immediately spend on its core constituents (army, Friends, officials). The market is an essential part of the system, in converting agricultural produce to cash or providing the goods for the king's men. Finally, the producers (especially the peasants of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Babylonia) are the basic foundation of the system, by providing the agricultural surplus to the state (and also to the communities, for consumption and exchange), but they do not receive any return in the form of support from the state: their function is taken for granted by everyone in the system.

The important question is that of stability. War was the main, constitutive function of the Hellenistic states, and it led to constant military conflict and fluctuation of the political map. This is true even for the later Hellenistic period, when the much-diminished Ptolemaic and Seleukid states conducted warfare aimed at each other's heartlands. In time of full-blown conflict, the expenditure was colossal. In return, the payoff of war was not just the one-off profit of booty, but principally the seizure of resources, namely producers or sites of taxation and exchange transactions—but conquest invariably disrupted the extraction of surplus, because of the flight of producers or processes of bargaining by local communities that obtained concessions in exchange for surrender: conquest might not start paying off immediately. War was an ideological and structural necessity (Chaniotis 2005), underlying the image of royal success and charisma that bound the state's constituents together; it also was a risky economic equation, in that it put stress on the income fluxes; and it massively increased expenditure and hence the need for surplus extraction, at the risk of endangering the stabilizing and legitimacy-building mechanisms of negotiation, gift-giving, arbitration, and adjudication. Such

Hellenistic Empires

stresses are durably visible in Egypt from the late third century onward, with widespread unrest, and perhaps also in Seleukid Babylonia, from time to time.

The other aspect of the economic interactions that bound the constituencies within the Hellenistic empire is that of expenditure and expansion. Rations and cash payments were handed over to the army, gifts were sent to the communities, (p. 348) rent from the Friends' estates was brought in: what was not consumed or hoarded was either spent (in the case of cash) or exchanged on the market to produce profit that could in turn be spent. The details of the processes are unclear; notably, we do not know what happened to the disposable income of the royal Friends and officials: Was it spent on luxury, loaned out, invested in economically productive activities? Who was the beneficiary, or the victim, of the economic life of the royal Friends and officials in the Hellenistic world? The possibility here is that the operation of the Hellenistic states had a generally expansionary effect, notably by encouraging consumption by a whole class closely linked with the state, and invested in the state's ethos of superior lifestyle and display; in turn, this form of consumption may have created copycat consumption by urban elites, in Greek cities (in the form of furniture, domestic decor, and luxury banqueting) but also in Babylonia where the material record shows rapid Hellenization of consumption habits, perhaps in imitation of the Greek settler class in the midst of the Babylonian population.

War was risky and potentially destabilizing; but it was also part of patterns of extraction and expenditure that were necessary to the state and, in turn, may have sustained growth and hence higher revenues. The balance between destabilizing and growth depended on political events; the crucial problem is that we do not have the budget sheet for any Hellenistic empire. Anecdotes and guesswork quantifications cannot fill the gap. It is now clear that progress will come from the recent, sustained work of historian-numismatists on the shape of the political economy of the Hellenistic world (Panagopoulou 2000; Meadows 2001; Le Rider and de Callatay 2006). It does not, however, seem that this was an inherently unsustainable world: the crucial steps toward its end were exogenous, namely the appearance of the Roman Republic on the political scene (resulting in major political but also economic changes), and the arrival of the Parthians on the east. These two major developments impacted on the various interactions sketched out above by reducing direct income streams and reshifting the various economic fluxes that had been profitably taxed by the Hellenistic states.

Living *Basileia*: The Social History of the Hellenistic Empires

The state affected people's lives; conversely, the texture of local institutions and social practices affected the range of actions open to the state. Though it is unhelpful to talk as if the Hellenistic world from the Adriatic to the Hindu-kush constituted a unitary "Hellenistic society," it is clear that a kingdom can be considered as a single social

formation. Hence any model of the Hellenistic state should avoid too narrow a definition of political power, and investment in too formal a definition of institutions, as opposed to a broader sense of the social institutions that informed (p. 349) the practice of empire and were shaped by empire (Bilde et al. 1990; Invernizzi 1993; Dreyer and Mittag 2011). This emerges out of the study of specific social contexts within Hellenistic empires, such as Ptolemaic Memphis (Thompson 1988) or Seleukid Babylonia (Aymard 1967; van der Spek 2001; 2006; Boiy 2004).

The analyses offered up to now make clear the state's power to influence social groups and individual behavior. Most obviously, the state imposed demands and obligations: in early-third-century Telmessos, in western Asia Minor, craftsmen had to pay a tax to the Ptolemaic state to be able to practice their trade—and also were liable to service as paramilitary patrollers in the countryside. The state levied tribute and taxation, but also had to maintain the whole nexus of Friends and officials by reassigning local resources to them. In the mid-third century, the Seleukid ruler Antiochos II, in the aftermath of his successful war against the Ptolemaic possessions in Asia Minor, seized the territory owned by the island city-state of Samos in mainland Asia Minor: the land was distributed as estates to Antiochos's Friends, and the decision was only reversed after intense lobbying by a Samian citizen (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 1.366), who followed the king to Sardeis and successfully argued against the seizure in front of the king's council (and the Friends). Another form of support granted by the state to its network of supporters was the foundation of royal colonies, maintained by land, labor, and resources taken locally. In Babylon, a Seleukid city appears in the second century: in the Akkadian sources, its members are named *pulite*, a transcription of the Greek *politai*, "citizens" (van der Spek 2001; Clancier 2007). The presence of a Greek dominant ethno-class was itself an effect, as well as a condition, of the Hellenistic states; this phenomenon lay at the root of the diversity of ethnic contact and interaction throughout the Hellenistic world, for instance in Ptolemaic Egypt, in Judaea, and in Babylonia. The state offered opportunities at many levels because of its needs for military men and for officials, and for collaborators such as tax farmers or middlemen (especially in the Ptolemaic economy); these opportunities were especially open to Greeks or citizens of Hellenized cities in Asia Minor and the Levant. Occasionally, the lives of these men who saw the workings of a Hellenistic state as a source of promotion and profit can be known in some detail, as in the case of Zenon, a man from Kaunos (one of the Hellenized cities mentioned above), who worked a newly developed district in the Fayoum as the semiprivate agent of Apollonios, a high-ranking financial official in Ptolemaic Egypt around the mid-third century (Orrieux 1983; Clarysse and Vandorpe 1995). The existence of more ordinary men and women who made a living within the territorial domination of one of the Hellenistic states, in Macedonia, southern Greece, Asia Minor, the Levant or Cyprus, Egypt, Babylonia, Iran, or the Upper Satrapies, remains a subject for inquiry. The available material and documentary record should be subjected to the interpretive pressure of questions about the impact of empire on daily lives across all of Hellenistic history.

Hellenistic Empires

Hellenistic societies, in turn, constrained the supralocal states. At the basic level, social structures of demography, production, and exchange, in all their diversity, constituted the underlying economy that the empires exploited for their existence. At another level, as mentioned above, the state existed as a bundle of (p. 350) commitments and promises to local constituencies, who expected ideological conformity, interaction, and negotiation—and concrete return, in kind or in cash or in the form of services. In other words, the Hellenistic state had to offer incentives to a multitude of local actors, which were not integrated within state structures but merely subject to control and to revenue extraction. The institutional context is the intersection of several factors: first, royal performative monopoly, claims to ownership and political domination through means of violence; second, the claims of local communities on part of the profits of ownership (to which they contribute) and the taxation of the producers; thirdly, the presence of competing states that can often make alternative offers, ideological and material, to local actors. In addition to the local communities, this institutionalist context also concerns groups or individuals within the local communities: local communities were not monolithic, but the site of competition between families and individuals.

The institutional context of royal ownership and patronage further affected the individual powerholders within the state—the military colonists, officials, and high-ranking courtiers that constituted the state’s apparatus were also bound to the state by incentives, namely the distribution of property and revenue extracted from below or generated by state activities such as warfare. When these incentives were not fulfilled, the state’s men could defect. This happened in the case of the free-floating specialists in warfare and administration that the kingdoms attracted and retained. The landowner and governor Ptolemaios, mentioned above, defected from Ptolemaic service to the Seleukids in 200 BCE, but the price was clearly the retention of his estates in his province (as well as his governorship). Strikingly, even the Macedonian civic aristocracies, closely integrated to the “national” kingship of the Antigonids, swiftly abandoned the Antigonid ruler Perseus after his catastrophic defeat by a Roman army at Pydna in 168 with the hope of retaining their social position (Ma 2011). Similarly, the Achaemenid nobility rallied to Alexander when it became clear that individuals could retain their privileges, estates, and chances of high office (Briant 1993). The state’s men and local constituencies could collaborate to pursue joint interests, against the state, at moments of crisis: after the defeat of the Seleukid army at Magnesia in 190, the citizens of Sardes (a major administrative center) and the royal officials sent a joint delegation to the victorious Roman commanders (the Scipio brothers) to surrender the city.

Within the concrete constraints of the Hellenistic economy, and the basic state function of revenue extraction and redistribution, one might return to the question of the purpose of the Hellenistic state. Without denying the presence and capacity of the state, nor the quotidian or long-term self-interest of multiple actors, individual and collective, the state itself might be viewed, in Foucauldian or constructivist (rather than functionalist or institutionalist) terms (Ma 2002). From this angle, the Hellenistic state appears as a largely arbitrary formation whose shape and content was determined by contingent genealogy (namely, the violent takeover of the Achaemenid world by a Graeco-

Macedonian elite). Hence the presence of particular traits of constant warfare and aggressiveness, gift-giving, and display as culturally determined means of self-expression of a power elite.

(p. 351) In turn, this power elite was supported by a largely autonomous, self-reproducing vertically- and horizontally-integrated administrative apparatus that evolved out of preexisting structures, and which maintained itself (and often its personnel) in spite of changes in political history. Hence the continuity in administrative practice across moments of conquest or upheaval. This is visible from the very founding moments of the Hellenistic age, namely Alexander's initial movements in Asia Minor (Briant 1993). The state survived the disappearance of kingdoms and their political power: the Parthian rulers took over the structures of Seleukid administration in Babylonia when they destroyed Seleukid rule in the east. When provincial powerholders broke away from a Hellenistic state, the end result on the ground was the reproduction of preexisting structures. This is even true for Hellenistic Judaea, whose religious revolt against the Seleukids (starting in 168 BCE) led to increasing independence at a time of irremediable dynastic strife in the Seleukid kingdom, and finally to the creation of the Hasmonaean state, a mini-Hellenistic kingdom in its own right. The durable inertia of power structures (another way of describing the stability of extraction and expenditure as charted above) was a fact that the various components of Hellenistic societies had to respond to. Local discourses and norms aimed at creating spaces of interaction and agency when dealing with the state, but in turn they locked in commitments and bargains that strengthened the state's inertia. Ruler cult or honors were means for local communities to interact with the state and also, as has long been recognized, a means of coming to terms with the inevitable, which they in fact reinforced: the weight of self-reproducing state structures.

The Nature of the Hellenistic States

To basilikon, the royal thing. The Hellenistic state was a personal monarchy based on leadership by militarily successful, charismatic individuals often born into legitimate dynasties; a patrimonial monarchy applying the template of personal ownership both to direct administration and to political control; and a monarchy of discourse, monopolizing legitimate speech as a reflection of ownership and as a means to shape the conditions of living for the ruled. These power postulates were materialized extensively across state territory in structures of control and violence, themselves funded by the extraction of surplus from producers and the taxing of exchanges; this materialization of the state also allowed it, or forced it, to take on jurisdictional and arbitrational roles, which further embedded its presence. In addition, power was mediated in interaction with local corporate bodies, above the level of the producers. This interaction took the form of redistribution of part of the revenue extracted by the apparatus of the state and of ideologically constraining bargains between the state and the local actors, whose agency and initiative should not be underestimated. Finally, the state manifested itself in

Hellenistic Empires

culturally (p. 352) determined forms of display (notably religious) and superpower competition (especially in the form of constant warfare), as well as in the inertia of its structures of control and extraction.

The survey of the workings of the Hellenistic empires given above examined four basic questions about the Hellenistic states: how they came into being, how they survived, what their key institutions were, and what their economic basis was (Goldstone and Haldon 2009). I further tried to examine cultural and ideological practices of empire, and within empires, in terms of their functional usefulness but also within a constructivist framework. What remains to be emphasized is the massive visibility of the Hellenistic empires across the landscape, from the Adriatic to the Hindu-kush, and the capacity of the state to shape daily interactions, even when these were not directly about interaction with the state and its institutions. The Hellenistic world was largely a world of tributary states, resting on an agrarian basis, and structured by the redistributory patterns between the center, local elites in the periphery, and various metropolitan-like entities (Friends, colonists, powerholders).

The importance of the Hellenistic empires in the history of the ancient state is linked to several factors. The ending of the Achaemenid empire, the reemergence of a neo-Near Eastern landscape of kingly polities, the integration of the Greek world of the cities within this world—all these are important developments, which determined a whole world and which this essay has tried to recover in their specificity. A final development lies in the transition to Roman rule. The system of Hellenistic states came to an end because of the impact of exogenous shocks on its political workings and its economic basis, but the Hellenistic states determined the shape of the Roman empire. As a province of the Roman empire, Egypt kept the central characteristic of being a tribute-producing territory, tightly administered by a state apparatus. In the remaining territories of the former Hellenistic kingdoms, the major evolution seems to be the end of the direct exploitation of tributary agricultural producers (in the royal land) in favor of local incorporated entities with which the state interacted—namely the Greek-style cities. In time, this development extended even to Roman Egypt. The emperor in the Roman world succeeded the Hellenistic king—in part: many of the administrative structures of the Hellenistic state did not survive the takeover by the Roman Republic, replaced with original structures reflecting the diverse interests and the political culture of second- and first-century Rome and Italy. When a Roman monarchy finally emerged at the end of the first century BCE (Millar 1977; 1983), what remained was precisely the articulate and patient cities of the Greek east, with patterns of discourse and interaction that had developed to interact with the Hellenistic king.

References

Alexandria and Alexandrianism. 1996. Malibu, CA.

Aperghis, G. G. 2004. *The Seleucid royal economy*. Cambridge. (p. 353)

Hellenistic Empires

Archibald, Z., J. K. Davies, and V. Gabrielsen, eds. 2011. *The economies of Hellenistic societies, third to first centuries bc*. Oxford.

Ashton, S. A. 2001. *Ptolemaic royal sculpture from Egypt: The interaction between Greek and Egyptian traditions*. Oxford.

Association Paris musée. *La Gloire d'Alexandrie*. 1998. Paris.

Austin, M. M. 1986. "Hellenistic kings, war and the economy." *Classical Quarterly* 36: 450–466.

Aymard, A. 1967. *Etudes d'histoire ancienne*. Paris.

Bagnall, R. 2001. "Archaeological work in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt 1995–2000." *American Journal of Archaeology* 105: 225–243.

Bar-Kochva, B. 1976. *The Seleucid army: Organization and tactics in the great campaigns*. Cambridge.

Bengtson, H. 1937–1952. *Die Strategie in der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag zum antiken Staatsrecht*. Munich.

Bernard, P. 1980. "Heracles, les Grottes de Karafto et le sanctuaire de Mont Sambulos en Iran." *Studia Iranica* 9: 301–324.

———. 2011. "The Greek colony at Aï Khanum and Hellenism in Central Asia." In F. Hiebert and P. Cabond, eds., *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the ancient world*. London.

Bertrand, J.-M. 1990. "Formes de discours politiques: Décrets des cités grecques et correspondance des rois hellénistique." In C. Nicolet, ed., *Du pouvoir dans l'antiquité: mots et réalités*, 101–115. Paris.

Bikerman, E. 1935. "La charte de Jérusalem." *Revue des Études Juives* 100: 4–35.

———. 1938. *Les Institutions des Séleucides*. Paris.

———. 1946–1948. "Une proclamation séleucide relative au Temple de Jérusalem." *Syria* 25: 67–85.

Bilde, P., ed. 1996. *Aspects of Hellenistic kingship*. Aarhus.

Bilde, P., et al. eds. 1990. *Religion and religious practice in the Seleucid kingdom*. Aarhus.

Billows, R. A. 1990. *Antigonos the one-eyed and the creation of the Hellenistic state*. Berkeley, CA.

Boiy, T. 2004. *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylonia*. Leuven.

Hellenistic Empires

Bosworth, A. B. 2002. *The legacy of Alexander: Politics, warfare and propaganda under the successors*. Oxford.

Bresson, A. 1995. "Un diadoque pas comme les autres." *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne* 21: 87-88.

Briant, P. 1990. "The Seleucid kingdom, the Achaemenid empire and the history of the Near East in the first millennium bc." In P. Bilde et al., eds., *Religion and religious practice in the Seleucid kingdom*, 40-65. Aarhus.

———. 1993. "Alexandre à Sardes." In J. Carlsen et al., eds., *Alexander the Great: reality and myth*, 13-27. Rome.

———. 1994. "Sources gréco-hellénistiques, institutions perses et institutions macédoniennes: Continuités, changements et bricolages." In H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, ed., *Achaemenid history VIII: Continuity and change*, 283-310. Leiden.

———. 1996. *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre*. Paris.

———. 2008. "Michael Rostovtzeff et le passage du monde achéménide au monde hellénistique." In B. Virgilio, ed., *Studi Ellenistici* 20, 137-154. Pisa.

Briant, P., and F. Joannès, eds. 2007. *La transition entre l'empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques*. Paris. (p. 354)

Bringmann, K., and H. von Steuben, eds. 1995. *Schenkungen hellenistischer Herrscher an griechische Städte und Heiligtümer*. Berlin.

Buraselis, K. 1982. *Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis: Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei ersten Antigoniden (Antigonos Monophthalmos, Demetrios Poliorketes und Antigonos Gonatas) im Ägäischen Meer und in Westkleinasien*. Munich.

Cabanes, P. 1996. "La Grèce du Nord (Épire, Macédoine) en plein développement au IV^e siècle avant J.-C." In P. Carlier, ed., *Le IV^e siècle av. J.-C.*, 195-204. Nancy.

Capdetrey, L. 2007. *Le pouvoir séleucide: Territoire, administration, finances d'un royaume hellénistique (312-129 avant J.C.)*. Rennes, France.

———. 2010. "Espaces, territoires et souveraineté dans le monde hellénistique: L'exemple du royaume hellénistique." In I. Savalli-Lestrade and I. Cogitore, eds., *Des rois au prince: Pratiques du pouvoir monarchique des l'Orient hellénistique et romain*, 17-36. Grenoble.

Chaniotis, A. 2005. *War in the Hellenistic world: A social and cultural history*. Oxford.

Chankowski, V., and F. Duyrat, eds. 2005. *Le roi et l'économie: Autonomie locale et structures royales dans l'économie de l'empire séleucide*. Lyon.

Clancier, P. 2007. "La Babylonie hellénistique." *Topoi* 15: 21-74.

Clarysse, W., and K. Vandorpe. 1995. *Zénon: Un homme d'affaires grec à l'ombre des pyramides*. Leuven.

Cohen, G. M. 1995. *The Hellenistic settlements in Europe, the islands, and Asia Minor*. Berkeley, CA.

———. 2006. *The Hellenistic settlements in Syria, the Red Sea basin, and North Africa*. Berkeley, CA.

Coloru, O. 2009. *Da Alessandro a Menandro: Il regno greco di Battriana*. Pisa.

Cotton, H. M., and M. Wörrle. 2007. "Seleukos IV to Heliodoros: A new dossier of royal correspondence from Israel." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 159: 191–205.

Crawford, D. 1980. "Ptolemy, Ptah and Apis in Hellenistic Memphis." In D. J. Crawford, J. Quagebeur, and W. Clarysse, eds., *Studies on Ptolemaic Memphis*, 1–42. Leuven.

Derow, P. S. 1989. "Rome, the fall of Macedon, and the sack of Corinth." In A. E. Astin et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. Vol. 8, 290–323. Cambridge.

Dreyer, B., and P. F. Mittag, eds. 2011. *Lokale Eliten und hellenistische Könige: Zwischen Konfrontation und Kooperation*. Berlin.

Duyrat, F., and O. Piccard, eds. 2005. *L'exception égyptienne? Production et échanges monétaire en Égypte hellénistique et romain*. Études alexandrines 10. Cairo.

Edson, C. 1958. "Imperium Macedonicum: The Seleucid empire and the literary evidence." *Classical Philology* 53: 153–170.

Ehling, K. 2008. *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden (164–63 v. Chr.): Vom Tode des Antiochos IV. bis zur Einrichtung der Provinz Syria unter Pompeius*. Stuttgart.

Faccella, M. 2006. *La dinastia degli Orontidi nella Comagene ellenistico-romana*. Pisa.

Franco, C. 1993. *Il regno di Lisimaco: Strutture amministrative e rapporti con le città*. Pisa.

Gauthier, P. 1985. *La cité grecque et ses bienfaiteurs*. Paris.

———. 1989. *Nouvelles Inscriptions de Sardes*. Vol. 2. Geneva.

———. 1993. "Epigraphica II. 4: Protagmata attalides à Egine (OGI 329)." *Revue de Philologie* 67: 41–48. (p. 355)

Goldstone, J. A., and J. F. Haldon. 2009. "Ancient states, empires and exploitation: Problems and perspectives." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds. *The dynamics of ancient empires: State power from Assyria to Byzantium*, 3–29. New York.

Gorré, G. 2009. *Les relations du clergé égyptien et des lagides d'après des sources privées*. Leuven.

Grainger, J. D. 1990. *Seleukos Nikator: Constructing a Hellenistic kingdom*. London.

Guimier-Sorbets, A. M., B. Miltiade, M. B. Hatzopoulos, and Y. Morizot, eds. 2006. *Rois, cités et nécropoles*. Athens.

Habicht, C. 1970. *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte*. 2nd ed. Munich.

———. 1989. "The Seleucids and their rivals." In A. E. Astin et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. Vol. 8, 324–387. Cambridge.

Hatzopoulos, M. B. 1996. *Macedonian institutions under the kings*. 2 vols. Athens.

———. 2001. *L'organisation de l'armée macédonienne sous les Antigonides: Problèmes anciens et documents nouveaux*. Paris.

Hölbl, G. 2001. *A history of the Ptolemaic empire*. London.

Hunter, R. L. 2003. *Theocritus: Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus*. Berkeley, CA.

Huss, W. 1994. *Der makedonische König und die ägyptischen Priester: Studien zur Geschichte des ptolemaischen Ägypten*. Stuttgart.

———. 2001. *Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit. 332–30 v. Chr.* Munich.

I. *Estremo Oriente*. 2004. Ed. F. Canali de Rossi. *Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente greco: Un repertorio*. Bonn.

Invernizzi, A. 1993. "Seleucia on the Tigris: Centre and periphery in Seleucid Asia." In P. Bilde, ed., *Centre and periphery in the Hellenistic world*, 230–250. Aarhus.

Jones, C. P. 2009. "The inscription from Tel Maresha for Olympiodoros." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 171: 100–104.

Keegan, J. 1987. *The mask of command: A study of generalship*. London.

Kobes, J. 1996. *Kleine Könige: Untersuchungen zu den Lokaldynasten im hellenistischen Kleinasien (323–188 v. Chr.)*. St. Katharinen, Germany.

Lane Fox, R., ed. 2011. *Brill's companion to ancient Macedonia*. Leiden.

Launey, M. 1951 (1987). *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques*. Expanded ed. by Y. Garlan, P. Gauthier, and C. Orrieux. Paris.

Le Rider, G. 1999–2000. *Études d'histoire monétaire et financière du monde grec: Écrits 1958–1998*. 3 vols. Ed. F. de Callatay, E. Papaefthymiou, and F. Queyrel. Athens.

- Le Rider, G., and F. de Callataÿ. 2006. *Les Séleucides et les Ptolémées: L'héritage monétaire et financier d'Alexandre le Grand*. Paris.
- Lund, H. S. 1992. *Lysimachus: A study in early Hellenistic kingship*. London.
- Ma, J. 2000. "Seleukids and speech-acts: Performative utterances, legitimacy and negotiation in the world of the Maccabees." *Scripta Classica Israelica* 19: 71-112.
- . 2002. *Antiochos III and the cities of Western Asia Minor*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- . 2003. "Kings." In A. Erskine, ed., *A companion to the Hellenistic world*. Oxford, 177-195.
- . 2008. "Paradigms and paradoxes in the Hellenistic world." In B. Virgilio, ed., *Studi Ellenistici* 20, 371-386. Pisa.
- . 2011. "Court, king and power in Antigonid Macedonia." In R. Lane Fox, ed., *Brill's companion to ancient Macedonia*, 521-544. Leiden.
- . Forthcoming. "Epigraphy and the display of authority." In J. K. Davies and J. Wilkes, eds., *Acts of the thirteenth international congress of Greek and Latin epigraphy*. London. (p. 356)
- Manning, J. 2010. *The last pharaohs: Egypt under the Ptolemies, 305-30 bc*. Princeton, NJ.
- Meadows, A. 2001. "Money, freedom and empire in the Hellenistic world." In A. Meadows and K. Shipton, eds., *Money and its uses in the ancient Greek world*, 53-63. Oxford.
- Mehl, A. 1986. *Seleukos Nikator und sein Reich. I: Seleukos' Leben und die Entwicklung seiner Machtposition*. Leuven.
- Michels, C. 2009. *Kulturtransfer und monarchischer Philhellenismus: Bithynien, Pontos und Kappadokien in hellenistischer Zeit*. Innsbruck.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The emperor in the Roman world*. London.
- . 1983. "State and subject: The impact of monarchy." In F. Millar and E. Segal, eds., *Caesar Augustus: Seven aspects*, 37-60. Oxford.
- Mooren, L. 1977. *La hiérarchie de cour ptolémaïque: Contribution à l'étude des institutions et des classes dirigeantes à l'époque hellénistique*. Leuven.
- Mørkholm, O. 1991. "Early Hellenistic coinage from the accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 B.C.)." In P. Grierson and U. Westermark, eds., *Early Hellenistic Coinage*. Cambridge.
- Orrieux, C. 1983. *Les papyrus de Zénon: L'horizon d'un grec en Egypte au IIIe siècle avant J.C*. Paris.

Hellenistic Empires

- Panagopoulou, K. 2000. "The Antigonids: Patterns of royal economy." In Z. Archibald et al., eds. *Hellenistic economies*, 313–364. London.
- Préaux, C. 1939. *L'économie royale des Lagides*. Brussels.
- Price, S. 1984. *Rituals and power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge.
- Rapin, C. 1992. *La trésorerie du palais hellénistique d'AïKhanoum*. Paris.
- Rice, E. E. 1983. *The grand procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus*. Oxford.
- Robert, L. 1963. *Noms indigènes dans l'Asie Mineure gréco-romaine*. Vol. 1. Paris.
- . 1967. "Encore une inscription grecque de l'Iran." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres* 111: 281–296.
- . 1968. "De Delphes à l'Oxus: Inscriptions grecques nouvelles de la Bactriane." *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 1968: 416–457.
- Rostovtzeff, M. 1932. *Seleucid Babylonia: Bullae and seals of clay with Greek inscriptions*. Yale Classical Studies 3. New Haven, CT.
- . 1941. *The social and economic history of the Hellenistic world*. 3 vols. Oxford.
- Savalli-Lestrade, I. 1998. *Lesphiloi royaux dans l'Asie hellénistique*. Geneva.
- . 2010. "Les rois hellénistiques, maîtres du temps." In I. Savalli-Lestrade and I. Cogitore, eds., *Des rois au prince: pratiques du pouvoir monarchique dans l'Orient hellénistique et romain (IVe siècle avant J.-C.- IIe siècle après J.-C.)*, 55–83. Grenoble.
- Sherwin-White, S. M., and A. Kuhrt. 1993. *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A new approach to the Seleucid empire*. London.
- Spawforth, A. 2007. *The court and court society in ancient monarchies*. London.
- Stanwick, P. E. 2002. *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek kings as Egyptian pharaohs*. Austin, TX.
- Tarn, W. W. 1913. *Antigonos Gonatas*. Oxford.
- Thompson, D. 1988. *Memphis under the Ptolemies*. Princeton, NJ.
- Thonemann, P., ed. Forthcoming. *Attalid Asia Minor: Money, international relations, and the state*. Oxford.
- Tuplin, C. J. 2009. "The Seleucids and their Achaemenid predecessors: A Persian inheritance?" In S. M. R. Darbandi and A. Zournatzi, eds., *Ancient Greece and ancient Iran: Cross-cultural encounters*, 109–136. Athens. (p. 357)
- Valbelle, D., and J. Leclant, eds. 2000. *Le décret de Memphis*. Paris.

Hellenistic Empires

van der Spek, R. 2001. "The theatre of Babylon in cuneiform." In W. H. van Soldt, ed., *Veenhof anniversary volume: Studies presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, 445–456. Leiden.

———. 2006. "The size and significance of the Babylonian temples under the successors." In P. Briant and F. Joannès, eds., *La transition entre l'empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques (vers 350–300 av. J.-C.)*, 261–307. Paris.

Virgilio, B. 2003. *Lancia, diadema e porpora: Il re e la regalità ellenistica*. 2nd ed. Pisa.

Wallenfels, R. 2000. "Sealing practices on legal documents from Hellenistic Babylonia." In M. Perna, ed., *Administrative documents in the Aegean and their Near Eastern counterparts*, 333–348. Turin.

Weber, G. 1997. "Interaktion, Repräsentation und Herrschaft: Der Königshof im Hellenismus." *Historische Zeitschrift* 23: 27–71.

Will, E. 1979–1982. *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique (323–30 av. J.-C.)*. 2 vols. Nancy. (p. 358)

John Ma

John Ma was trained in ancient history in Geneva, Oxford, Paris, Hamburg, and Princeton; he now teaches ancient history at Oxford University. His main interests are Greek epigraphy and the social history of power in the ancient world, through the study of the two complementary forms of tributary empire and local city-state.



Oxford Handbooks Online

Carthage

Walter Ameling

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0014

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of state formation in Carthage, explaining that the history of the Carthaginian state is one with a changing constitution, with new institutions emerging and old institutions losing importance. It investigates why Carthage did not go the way of many other *poleis* like those in Greece. The chapter also argues that the end of Carthage is inextricably bound up with the question of Roman imperialism and that while its ruling aristocracy died with its city, there was no doubt that the Carthaginians had identified themselves with their city, its history, and its traditions.

Keywords: Carthage, state formation, changing constitution, poleis, Roman imperialism, ruling aristocracy

Introduction

Carthage was founded in the late ninth century BCE as a Tyrian colony (Timaios, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 566 F 60; Docter et al. 2005), and it exists still as a suburb of today's Tunisian capital. Its location had been carefully selected with regard to water supply and access to a large and fertile tract of land in a region well known by the Phoenicians; its agricultural potential was one of the criteria, if not the prime one, in the selection of the site (Alvar and Wagner 1985; Wagner and Alvar 1989). The new city—*qrt hdst* means just that—was easily defended and there was, of course, a sheltered beach capacious enough for a large number of ships.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 13.1 The Carthaginian Empire from the First to the Second Punic War

Carthage was founded as a city with institutions, with a population of differing social status, and it featured a foundation myth, the famous story of Queen Dido (Gades was the only other Phoenician foundation with its own myth). Carthage's extraordinary size is visible even in the earliest stages of its history: it is another indicator for the special status it must have had among the western

Phoenician cities. For all practical purposes, Carthage was autonomous from the beginning, because a city the size of archaic Carthage could not be controlled by a far-off metropolis. There is no sign of any dependence on Tyre, even if the Carthaginians did not sever every tie and continued to worship the great god of Tyre: they sent yearly offerings to Melqart, designated as tithes (Ferjaoui 1993). The custom sometimes lapsed but was always revived, and in periods of distress the Tyrians sought and received aid from Carthage. Some conquerors of Phoenicia are said to have thought of subjecting Carthage; this is more an indication of Carthage being seen as part of the Phoenician world than a proof of political dependence (and perhaps those plans are fictitious). Other connections existed, too, but were in no way special (Map 13.1). (p. 362)

Carthage developed rapidly, but we are barely able to reconstruct its history in outlines: we have to rely almost completely on Greek and Roman sources, and even an attempt to arrange the city's history in epochs is dominated by the Greco-Roman view and the periodization it implies. The first centuries of the city's history were mostly confined to Africa and to acquiring a strong position there, even if contacts with the Phoenician world in East and West are visible in the archaeological record. Only in the sixth century BCE did the Carthaginians begin to look beyond Africa. They had (military and other) contacts with Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans and began to build an empire by occupying Phoenician positions in Sardinia, Sicily, and elsewhere. Politically, the fifth century BCE is almost a dark age, but Carthage is at least present in the minds of the Greeks in East and West as one of the dominant powers in the Mediterranean. From the sixth century on, Carthage had expanded its presence on Sicily in constant conflict with the Greeks, culminating in the fourth century. Simultaneously, there were important developments in Africa, which must have had their own rhythms and laws, but they are completely hidden to us. These years saw an extension of Carthaginian rule in Africa, both in terms of ruling over a larger territory (roughly equivalent to the Roman province Africa proconsularis or modern Tunisia; cf. Moscati 1994, 205ff.) and of an intensified rule: the system (p. 363) of

Carthage

territorial organization we encounter in the third century must date back to the fifth or fourth centuries. Perhaps the Carthaginians first established themselves in Spain during the fourth century, but later they lost control. The third and second centuries are dominated by the fight against Rome, and even the Carthaginians will have seen the three Punic wars as epoch-making events—though at least two generations in the second century lived in complete peace and experienced the renewed wealth of their city.

The periodization of Carthaginian history is difficult to accomplish, because our knowledge of Carthage's African history is inadequate. Our Greco-Roman sources focus on the Carthaginian wars and therefore on Carthage's exploits overseas. One of our preconceptions, Carthage as a maritime power, is established by this bias of the sources. Of course, Carthage possessed a large fleet and exercised maritime power, but the core of the state was not influenced by this (and could it be influenced by this—considering the conditions of seafaring in antiquity?).

The history of the Carthaginian state is the history of a state with a changing constitution, with new institutions emerging and old institutions losing importance, perhaps even disappearing completely. Unfortunately, we are not able to link these processes to internal politics and external successes and failures in more than a merely general way (usually wars, and especially lost wars, act as promoters of constitutional change and we have almost no evidence in this regard from Carthage with the exception of Hannibal's failed reforms). But we can observe that Carthage ruled for more than three centuries over a substantial, though changing territory. This was no mean feat, if we compare the extension of Carthaginian rule and its sheer length of time with the rule of other, more prominent states—neither Sparta and Athens nor the empire of Alexander the Great or most Hellenistic kingdoms ruled as long. Carthage remained a city-state, even if it succeeded in establishing an empire, and—with the exception of Rome—most city-state empires perished much quicker. This leads to the simple question of why Carthage did not go the way of many other poleis.

The Character of the Sources

Our sources on the Carthaginian state (and its history) are scanty. The archaeological record, rich as it may be, is not always helpful in the search for public institutions and their impact. Punic sources on Carthage are—with very rare exceptions—confined to mostly standardized inscriptions. Greek writings dealing specifically with the Carthaginian constitution are lost (Aristotle's *Politeia*; Hippagoras, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 743). Historians are merely interested in the wars between Carthaginians and Greeks or Romans: they mention social and constitutional matters only by chance and are generally biased (Dubuisson 1992, 227ff.; Krings 1998).

Greek and Latin authors usually translated Punic designations for magistracies and the state's institutions or looked for some kind of illustrative rendering (p. 364) (Sznycer 1995, 103ff.; 1999, 52ff.). Different translators used different terms for the same object:

we know *boule*, *gerontion*, *gerousia*, *synedrion*, *senatus*, *consilium*, and so forth and are quite confident that a single institution is meant, a council of elders. But what about *basileus*, *basileia*, *rex*, *dux*, *sufes*, *consul*, and *praetor*? These terms give rise to different categorizations of the political system and exclude some other types of systems—but they interpret the Carthaginian institutions in categories coined by Greeks and Romans. The same holds true for the Carthaginian constitution as a whole. It is often praised as a mixed constitution, and Polybius uses this construct of Greek political philosophy to postulate a deterioration of the Carthaginian constitution after the first Punic war: he wanted to explain Rome's rise to power by the superiority of the Roman constitution and therefore needed a deteriorating Carthaginian constitution (Heuss 1943, 84–85). All of his remarks on Carthage are to be seen in this light and should therefore be used cautiously—as are all other general classifications, even if we are not able to point out their peculiar preconceptions. Generally, Greeks and Romans saw Carthage as “the other,” which hampered their understanding—a position, unfortunately, taken also by many modern historians.

The Early History

The newly founded Carthage grew rapidly to an astonishing size—compared with other settlements of the eighth and seventh centuries (Docter 2002–2003). Commerce with the hinterland (or with Greeks) provides no sufficient explanation for this phenomenon: Carthage's size is another indication of the founders' intentions to build a self-sufficient and autonomous city.

The Phoenician city-states were the only available models for the “new city” (on the name, see Garbini 1983, 156; Manfredi 1999, 69ff.). Monarchy was their traditional form of rule, and the Phoenician monarchs had the same duties as other Near Eastern monarchs: political, economic, and sacral. But we don't know how these spheres related to each other, whether the political power of the kings decreased, if there was a transfer of power to a (merchant or landed) aristocracy, or if the king retained only judicial and sacral authority. No precise answer to any of these (and other) questions is possible, especially not for the ninth century. Even if magistrates and a council of elders are already mentioned in Donner and Röllig (1962, no. 1), it is difficult to define their functions and relations to the power of the king. Some Punic inscriptions attest the “public and institutional nature of...sacred precincts” (Aubet 1993, 215), and this may well be a Tyrian heritage.

The early traces of urban planning in Carthage require some kind of general authority, and we infer a sizable population from the area covered by the city—a population sufficiently varied as to need control, rules, and a balancing of interests. The diverse types of pottery found are proof of wide-ranging foreign contacts, not only with other Phoenician cities but also with different groups of Greeks. (p. 365) Material remains from

Carthage

around 600 BCE attest an interest in the hinterland (Lund 1988, 44ff.), and the foundation of Kerkouane belongs to the sixth century, too.

We can only guess at the extent of Carthage's territory. To the north, the Bagradas must have been the border between Carthage and Utica; stones from quarries near Cap Bon were used for very early buildings, and therefore this region was controlled by Carthage. *Vectigalia* are paid to the tribes of the African hinterland, and this type of payment is well known in other regions where cities are confronted with migrant tribes. The payment is a sign of interest in one's own territory, transcending an interest in the easily defended peninsula of Carthage itself. But despite these vectigalia, Carthaginian territory must have been in constant need of defense against nomads, and the need for defense and constant vigilance was the reason for the warlike characteristics of Carthage's society (Ameling 1993, 155ff.).

The extent of Carthage's political interests in the sixth century is better documented than its territory, because Carthaginians sometimes interacted with the Greeks. Some of these actions may be regarded as private enterprises of Carthaginian pirates, but others attest to a state capable of acting in faraway places and of imposing its will on others. In the same time, the Carthaginians expanded their empire to Sicily and Sardinia, and this expansion was connected intimately with the process of colonization, in itself another proof of a growing population (on the agricultural exploitation of the newly won territories see Manfredi 1993; van Dommelen 2006).

The first Roman-Carthaginian treaty, concluded around 500, makes stipulations not only for Carthage and its surroundings but also for the other parts of the Carthaginian empire. Libya and Sardinia are named, and one clause concerns the part of Sicily over which the Carthaginians were masters—but the same clause attests to the lack of Carthaginian magistrates on the island. Punic Sicily was not subject to a uniform legal status but was still seen as a conglomerate of cities, Punic and Greek; of tribes; and of other entities (on the treaties see Scardigli 1991).

The first constitutional information belongs to the sixth century, too. The periplus of Hanno starts with "*edoxe Karchedoniois*," a people's decree consigning the charge of founding cities to "king Hanno," and Justin's report of Malchus knows a "populus," a "contio," "senatores" (18, 7, 16) and a "dux" (18, 7, 2; 7), a military leader in command of citizen troops but of citizen troops characterized as his following. These sources, not without their own, grave problems, mention what was to be expected: a council of elders and a popular assembly. Only the position of military leaders like Malchus or Hamilkar, who lost his life and the battle of Himera in 480, may be bit irregular. Herodotos called Hamilkar a "king according to his virtuous character" (7.166), and I argued for a king distinguished by a hereditary charisma. I assumed that the kings of this family had lost most of their power to the rising aristocracy (arguing from the conditions in Phoenicia) and had only retained the ex officio command of the city's troops and sacral duties. In all other matters, they had lost their powers and had become part of the aristocracy

(Ameling 1993, 76ff.; contra Huss 1997), because, without doubt, Carthage was governed by an aristocracy.

(p. 366) The Carthaginian nobles were evidently able to command armed followings, which in itself points to a rather weak state. These followings must have been established in times when the state was not able to react sufficiently fast to protect its own citizens—certainly a situation common in early fights against nomadic tribes. By influence, wealth, and followers, Carthaginian nobles were the peers of their Greek counterparts, and they were connected—by marriage and *xenia*—to the networks of the Greek aristocracy on Sicily (and perhaps elsewhere). Hamilkar fought for Himera on Sicily due to his *xenia* or “friendship” with its leader and other Greek dynasts (Herodotus 7.165). The range of Carthaginian foreign policy had grown, but it was still conducted in a thoroughly aristocratic way. Until the early fifth century the state had not succeeded in establishing a monopoly on violence, as private wars on land and private wars on sea (commonly known as piracy) attest. During this time, the state could and did use the warlike aristocracy for its own purposes, but during the fifth century it was more and more in his interest to assert his monopoly. The intensification of contacts with other states, brought about by Carthage’s expansion and success, were paramount in changing this and other aspects of the Carthaginian state.

With increasing foreign contacts the danger increased that the city as a whole would be held liable for the private enterprises of its aristocrats (see Bengtson 1975, no. 131, Carthage paying for Hamilkar’s war). The community became interested in checking private war and asserting its monopoly—only allowing piracy to continue, because the people affected by it were either far away or not strong enough to act against the pirates’ home. After 241, Rome demanded compensations for any loss brought about by a Carthaginian pirate—and from now on, it was in Carthage’s best interest to suppress piracy.

The growing complexity of foreign relations favored the growth and development of the state’s monopoly on violence, which must have changed social structures in Carthage as well: (military) followings became less important since the aristocracy was no longer able to deliver an adequate remuneration. Consequently, *xenia* seems to have become less important, and we find a growing number of *proxenoi*, evidence for the transition from private to public foreign contacts.

Another mark of an archaic state is its treatment of strangers: usually, strangers have no right to appeal to courts, magistrates, and so forth. The growing numbers of contacts with strangers made protection by single members of the aristocracy a precarious matter, and aristocratic politics were increasingly not sufficient to deal with the multiplicity of problems created by foreign relations, trade, and resident aliens. The state started to get involved in these matters during the late sixth century (Polybius 3.22.8–9).

If we consider a coexistence of private and public actions as a period of state formation, this period came to an end in the fifth century. During this time the military commander became a magistrate, elected and answerable for his conduct in the office, and all of the other important magistracies were collegial and tenure was usually limited to a year (we know next to nothing before that). The double office was surely a precaution against ambitious office-bearers, if it had not also (p. 367) been used as a means to dilute the royal power. A state with stronger institutions meant not necessarily that the aristocracy lost its power, but that this power was diverted into well-defined channels by the state (a process that can be seen in other city-states, too)—and that this process might have helped the aristocracy as a group to remain in power.

The City

Citizens and Subjects

The “oath of Hannibal” (Polybius 7.9.3 [Schmitt 1969, no. 528]) lists the components of the Carthaginian empire in 215, but some of them are already attested in the fourth century (cf. Polybius 3.24.3): “the sovereign Carthaginians, Hannibal their general and all those peoples who live under Carthaginian rule and observe the same laws; likewise the people of Utica and all cities and tribes that are subject to Carthage, and our soldiers and allies; likewise all cities and tribes in Italy, Cisalpine Gaul and Liguria with whom we are in alliance, and with whomsoever we may hereafter enter into an alliance” (Scott-Kilvert 1979). The political entities are identified as groups of persons: the Carthaginian state is no abstract concept, but consists of different groups of people.

Citizens

Some historians believe in different degrees of Carthaginian citizenship, which are supposed to reflect the social rank of individuals, but this is extremely unlikely (Sznycer 1992, 278ff.; cf. 1995, 107: *baalim* as designation for citizens [?]). The way Aristotle talks about the *demos* and Polybios about the mass and its influence seems to exclude the existence of large groups with lesser rights (Polybius 10.8.5; Livy 26.47.1ff. are useless). Citizenship could be conferred: Hannibal promised it to his soldiers—in the event of victory. Natives of other Punic cities might have had an easier access to Carthaginian citizenship, perhaps simply through taking up residence in Carthage.

Freed slaves were neither citizens nor strangers, but became “men of Sidon.” Was their status very different from the status of the *hyparchoi*, who used the same laws as the Carthaginians? Since freedmen acquired a special status the Carthaginian people’s assembly was concerned with the mechanism of their liberation. Many strangers lived in

Carthage

the city, some of them for a long time. They had to be legally acknowledged, perhaps in the same way the Athenians had to acknowledge their *metoikoi* (Huss 1985, 501–502).

What did Carthaginian citizenship mean—besides a possibility to distinguish the rulers from the ruled? There will have been a common private and criminal (p. 368) law for the citizens, and perhaps they had to pay taxes only in exceptional times. Citizens were subject to the draft: from the earliest times on Carthaginian citizens served in the army, usually as “hoplites,” and the city waged no war without citizen soldiers (Ameling 1993, 190ff.).

“All under the dominion of Carthage (*hyparchoi*), who live under the same laws”

The *hyparchoi* are often equated with the Libyphoenicians, the inhabitants of the coastal cities sharing epigamia with the Carthaginians. *Epigamia* surely meant not only the right of marriage, but also a certain measure of equal rights—at least in regard to private and civil law. These equal rights were also necessary to distinguish them from simple subjects. Their rights were not conferred *virim*, nor did they belong to a certain well-defined group in a city: the status, surely conferred by Carthage, was the status of the whole city—as the continued existence of *sufetal* constitutions after the fall of Carthage indicates (list in Manfredi 2003, 383ff.). We can guess at the origin of this status: colonies founded by Carthage, and therefore using the same laws, had a special status (and perhaps other Phoenician foundations obtained the same status on becoming part of the Carthaginian empire). Cities using the same laws need not have been restricted to Africa, but there is no evidence for them in any other place. The *hyparchoi* were liable to taxes (or tributes) and military levy.

Utica

The first mention of Utica as a part of the Carthaginian empire belongs to the fourth century, therefore its formal subjection took place in the fifth or early fourth century. The city’s continuing autonomy is usually taken as a token of respect for its greater age. Even such a status could be accompanied by a less than cordial relationship. The people of Utica entertained an old hatred against Carthage (Appian, *Libyke* 75.347)—but perhaps it originated only after the first Punic war (Polybius 1.88.4).

“All cities and people that are subject to Carthage”

This category must have included the great mass of Carthaginian subjects. There is no need to assume that all of them had (or lacked) the same rights: even here, there have been distinctions, not only between “cities and people” but also between different cities and different tribes, almost certainly reflecting the way their (p. 369) connection with

Carthage

Carthage had been formed. Being subject did not necessarily imply a direct Carthaginian rule: Carthage shunned such involvements where possible. Internal autonomy was nevertheless not guaranteed, but it could be revoked at the Carthaginians' whim.

Subjects had to pay tributes (or taxes), and sometimes Carthage was able to fix those at will (Polybius 1.72.2–3). They had to supply troops, and it seems that these troops were not commanded by their own, but by Carthaginian officers.

Magistrates

Aristotle made some general remarks on Carthaginian magistrates (*Politics* 1273 a 17–20). They serve “without receiving pay,” are elected by the people, not drawn by lot (nor born to office), and lawsuits are judged by them, not by the people. He specifies the criteria for election but fails to tell us if these were formal requirements: the rulers should be chosen “not only for their merit but also for their wealth” (2.1273 a 23–4; especially for sufetes and generals). An accumulation of different offices was allowed—and esteemed (1273 b 8–9), even though there was an internal hierarchy of offices. We know nothing about iteration (Répertoire 1914, no. 910?), but it cannot have been thought dishonorable. All magistracies were annual and collegial, but again we know nothing about the distribution of duties or the way conflicts were resolved. The total number of magistracies was not very large—but our knowledge of them is not large, either.

The Phoenician root “spt” means “to judge” and “to rule” (Niehr 1986). The title of Carthage's highest magistrate, “sufes,” is derived from this root (Huss 1983, 25ff.); this office is first attested around 400, but there will have been earlier sufetes. The two sufetes served as eponymous officials of the city. In accordance with their title they had judicial powers; could convene the council and preside over it; and could perhaps introduce motions (they may have had the same right in the people's assembly, since a sufete could promulgate laws). They will have been responsible for the state's finances, giving directives and instructions to a lower magistrate like the “quaestor.” They controlled policing (not an important matter), perhaps with the help of certain minor magistracies, which were assigned to assist the sufetes. To sum up: there is no hint of any military power, and there is almost no indication of the sufetes having been involved in the state's foreign policy or territorial administration—if they did not try to influence the council or the people's assembly. This is not necessarily extraordinary; most Greek cities knew no mingling of civil and military authority.

The Carthaginians had a large number of more or less minor magistracies, of which the rab (“rb” = the great [used as an honorific title, too]) seems to be the most important. He is believed to have been responsible for the state's finances (Ferjaoui 1991), thus perhaps identical with the quaestor, who became—after the completion of his office—a member of the *ordo iudicum*. A “mhšbm,” controller (of the finances), (p. 370) is attested on Sicilian coins, minted in the early third century. They may have been purely military officials, but

Carthage

the same office is attested in Carthage, where it seems to have had a different “controlling” function, perhaps in customs. Usually there were two controllers (in itself a control mechanism). Several minor magistracies are known, for example, the *spr̄m*, official secretaries. A “viator” (Livy 33.46.5) had some kind of police function, and some had the right to impose fines. Punic, but non-Carthaginian inscriptions attest some other magistrates, too, for instance market inspectors (cf. Donner and Röllig 1962, no. 92, and other magistracies: Sznycer 2003, 38, 44–5, 51).

Institutions

Councils

The most important institution of the Carthaginian state, mentioned already for the sixth century (Iustin 18.7.17), was the council of—perhaps 300—elders. After Aristotle had described the Carthaginian constitution, a “*sanctius consilium*” of thirty members as part of the council may have developed (Livy 30.16.3).

It seems that the council was not free to discuss every topic it wanted, but that the right to introduce a motion lay with the presiding *sufetes*. The council resolved upon peace and war, decided on recruitment, and its members accompanied the generals in the field to exercise some control (the recruiting done by council members can be interpreted in the same way). Decisions about Carthage’s finances rested with it, too.

We do not know how the council’s members were (s)elected; perhaps a lower magistracy was a requirement. Lacking sources to another effect, we may believe that—once introduced—councilors were elected for their whole life.

The “*iudicum ordo*” (the term is Livy’s) is usually equated with the “100” or “104.” There is some reason to suppose that its members served originally only for one year, being elected by the pentarchies—“by merit” (Aristotle, *Politics* 1272 b 36–7), not “according to merit and wealth”)—as were the *sufetes* (see above). If the 100 had to be members of the council (Iustin 19.2.5), the pentarchies were seriously restricted in their choice, iteration of the office being a necessary consequence (on the enigmatic pentarchies, see *Politics* 1273 b 13–17).

The 100 were created as a court to judge the Carthaginian generals after the end of a campaign. In time, the institution changed and acquired a larger power: not only does Aristotle name it as the “highest office,” it was also one of the principal targets of Hannibal’s constitutional reforms. In the beginning of the second century, the 100 held office for life. They were not only responsible for the accounting of the generals, but served also as (political?) judges (Livy 33.46). Every former *quaestor* became automatically a member. Hannibal, it seems, wanted (unsuccessfully) to return at least partly to the earlier state of affairs (Livy 33.46.7): “that the judges should be elected for one year, and that nobody should be a judge for two consecutive years.”

Carthage

The increasing power of the 100 resulted in another inner circle of Carthaginian politics: the council (and the higher officials) had to deal with the fact that there (p. 371) was not only the council itself but also two different, elite bodies within it: the 30 and the 100.

The People's Assembly

The Punic designation of the people's assembly was 'm (Sznycer 1992, 262ff.). Aristotle believed that it had too much power, thereby indicating a deterioration of the constitution (*Politics* 2.1273 a 6–13).

The sufetes must have convened the people's assembly on a regular basis, if only for election purposes. The people elected the magistrates and sat in their judgment—at least until the introduction of the 100. After the first Punic war the assembly voted on the military leaders, too, which may be one of the reasons Polybios talks about the growing powers of the people (6.51.6; cf. the prominent and confident role of the people in the inscription in Sznycer 2003, 31ff. [perhaps third century]). The people's assembly could settle constitutional matters (Livy 33.46.6).

According to Aristotle, the Carthaginian people could discuss almost anything—if the sufetes and the majority of the council did not agree to prevent a certain topic from being discussed. The assembly was not confined to accept or decline a proposed motion: every citizen could introduce a proposal of his own (Huxley 2003, 281ff.). But the people's rights were mostly negative: magistrates and council could still act within the constitutional limits of their offices, even if they lacked the people's approval. In a crisis, the council could resolve to bring a difficult decision before the people and not to decide it alone (Diodorus 14.47.2). At least technically, the people were in power—but the technical possibility to rule might not be the social or political possibility.

Territorial Administration

The administration of the Carthaginian state must have reflected the different legal status of its parts. Surely, the magistrates of Carthage administered its *chora* (territory), and surely, there was some difference between land settled by *hyparchoi* and subjects (*hypekooi*). The *hyparchoi* will have retained a higher degree of autonomy than the *hypekooi*—but even a certain autonomy of their subjects was in Carthage's interest, because it reduced the necessary bureaucracy. The so-called Carthaginian empire must have been a mosaic of places with different legal and social structures.

Africa

The control of its African territory was of the greatest importance for Carthage: it was one of the most fertile regions of the Mediterranean; and it supplied food, men, (p. 372)

Carthage

and money in large quantities (on the archaeological remains see Fantar 1992, 1993; on the territorial administration Manfredi 2003).

Africa was full of cities, but most of them were little more than an accumulation of granges, and many homesteads were fortified—even Carthage was not able to control every tribe. The lack of any Libyan unity is a reflex of the prevalent social structures; it facilitated Carthaginian rule, but made a subdivision of the territory necessary. Carthage created different pagi (the Latin word reflects the Punic *ʿrst*): Tusca, Gunzuzi, Muxsi, Gurzensis, the Byzacene, and the great plains (Picard 1966). At least some kind of fiscal organization must have corresponded to these subdivisions.

The “*stratego*i of Libya” were in charge of the administration of Libya during the third century (Polybius 1.67.1; 72.3–4); taxes and tributes were theirs to assess, and it is said that the Carthaginians—in danger of losing the first Punic war— applauded a *strategos*, who succeeded in exacting a larger amount of taxes. The level of these tributes and the manner of their collection didn’t help to endear Carthage to its Libyan subjects.

The *strategos* must have commanded some kind of help to fulfill their duties and also must have had some kind of civil jurisdiction and police power. They had no far-reaching military powers, which must reflect the fact that Libyans posed no constant military threat to Carthaginian rule and security.

Sicily

The Carthaginians made themselves masters of the Phoenician cities on the western tip of the island during the late sixth century, but the cities did retain some autonomy: Motye, Eryx, and Panormos minted coins in the later fifth century and continued to do so in the fourth century. The first Roman-Carthaginian treaty attests to a complicated and uneven juridical situation in Punic Sicily: tribes, Greek poleis, Punic and Sicel cities, and Carthaginian garrisons existed side by side—and there were, of course, allies to supply further troops (Diodorus 13.59.6). The Greeks had their own word for this part of the island, the Carthaginian *epikrateia*, but this is no proof of uniform administration (Hans 1983).

The cities had to contribute troops to the Carthaginian army (Diodorus 14.54.6; 19.106.5). They paid tribute (13.59.3; 114.1; 14.65.2, where the Carthaginians allow their subjects to live by their own laws), and perhaps also tithes on the crop (Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.3.6.13). Taxes were probably collected by the troops—who were (due to the presence of the Greeks) much more necessary than in Africa. Not only garrisons with their commanders, but also permanent occupying forces are attested (*ʿm mhnt*). Contrary to the situation in Libya, there is not the least hint of any civil administration of the *epikrateia*, since its different parts had a long tradition of self-administration. Sardinia (and Corsica) will have been administered similarly.

(p. 373) Spain

The accumulating archaeological evidence gives new credit to some sources attesting an early Carthaginian presence in Spain. The second Roman-Carthaginian treaty implies political interests there, even some kind of authority that was lost before the middle of the third century (Polybius 1.10.5; 2.1.6; Koch 2000), perhaps, but not necessarily, in the course of the first Punic war. We have no idea how this Carthaginian dominion in Spain was designed or how Carthaginian authority was administered. A city like Gades (Livy 28, 37, 1–2) must have been governed differently than the Celtic tribes.

A new drive to secure Spain was undertaken after the first Punic war to make up for the damage of the Carthaginian economy. Overall, the Barcids were successful and established a sphere of influence reaching far to the north and far inland (Polybius 4.28.1). Our written sources focus on the second Punic war, its outbreak, and the role played by the Barcids—which led some historians to assume Barcid independence or even monarchy. But the army’s choice of Hasdrubal and Hannibal as generals instead of their—unexpectedly dying—predecessors was approved and ratified by the Carthaginian people. The Barcids used personal ties to the tribal leaders to strengthen Carthaginian rule and their special blend of force and diplomacy was highly efficient (Leidl 1996, 118ff.).

We know next to nothing about civil administration. Perhaps there was not enough time to develop it, and as long as warfare was preeminent, the military commanders stood in the forefront not only of every action, but also of any administration. The foundation of cities, organizing of mining, taxation, conscription of soldiers, and hiring of mercenaries were among the duties of the Barcids, as was the protection of the Carthaginian rule by means of forts, garrisons, or warfare.

Military Administration

The sufetes had no visible military powers, and there is no real indication of a permanently established commander-in-chief of the Carthaginian troops. During the sixth and fifth centuries, the generalship was confined to very few persons (Iustin 18.7.1; 19.1.7); since all of them belonged to the same family, we might call it a hereditary generalship—which would accord well with archaic conditions or traces of monarchical power.

The earliest known election of a *strategos* took place in 410 (but this reflects our sources), and the first known instance of accountability belongs to the fifth century, too. An elected and accountable general was nothing more than another magistrate. Since the end of the fifth century the Carthaginians elected usually two generals with equal authority—which was a way to check their power (on the *strategos*, see Wollner 1987). The generals were able to conclude a certain type of (p. 374) treaty, a “berit” (Schmitt

1969, nos. 503, 528 [Bickerman 1985, 257ff.; 375ff]). It could be concluded without any special constitutional competence but was binding only for the person concluding it. Many armistices and peace treaties will have started as *berit*.

The people's assembly elected the generals (Diodorus 25.8) for the duration of a war, and it could recall them in case of mismanagement. Usually, the most distinguished citizens were chosen (Diodorus 20.10.3). The generals were under the severe control of the council, especially of the 100, to counter any danger of a successful military coup. The allocation of money and of troops through the council diminished the possibilities of a coup d'état, as did the absence of a large standing army. There were garrisons on the islands, in Libya, and in Spain, but none large enough to endanger the large number of Carthaginian citizen soldiers. The lack of a permanent army and permanent commanders-in-chief and the conscription of the citizens in times of need all worked together to lessen the loyalty of the army to the generals, who never succeeded in assuming the control of the state.

Carthaginian officers (members of the aristocracy?) commanded the conscripted troops, and only the subaltern officers shared the nationality of their troops. Allied troops stood under the command of their own officers, mercenaries sometimes under the command of condottieri. The process of conscription was initiated by the Carthaginian demand but will have been carried out by allies and subjects themselves. All of these troops were paid by Carthage, sometimes during the war, but sometimes only after its end. All soldiers got food or some kind of allocation for it, and at least the mercenaries were armed by the state.

The *stratego*i commanded the fleet, that is, the nauch had to obey their orders (Diodorus 14.49.1; cf. Polybius 3.95.2; Livy 22.19.3), even though he was elected by the people (Polybius 1.60.3). Groups of sixty ships are prominent in our sources, and they must have been under the command of an admiral's subordinate (cf. Polybius 1.21.6); single ships were commanded by trierarchs (Polybius 1.24.5; 1.44.1).

The Carthaginian citizens served in almost every war either in the army or in the navy, or in both. The fleet needed large numbers of rowers, and with the growing demands of the fleet, the number of citizens to be spared for the army shrunk. Citizens were very early outnumbered by allies and subjects, whose duty it was to supply soldiers (cavalry was almost completely provided by the Libyans and by Numidian tribes). Most African wars will have been waged with Libyan and citizen troops, not with mercenaries (no coins were minted in Africa before the fourth century). The development of a mercenary army began only in the late fifth century and started with the hiring of specialists not to be found among the Carthaginians (Fariselli 2002). The longer the wars the Carthaginians waged, and the more specialized warfare got in reaction to Hellenistic developments, the more importance was attached to mercenaries. The greatest change was brought about by the Punic wars with their enormous strain on Carthaginian manpower. Only now the professional army took over—or better: the battles and maneuvers recorded by our very

Carthage

lop-sided tradition were mainly fought by professional troops, which could stay for many years in a foreign country.

(p. 375) Carthage's empire had been established by warfare, and it is only natural that war was considered as an aristocratic activity: society regarded military virtues highly (Ameling 1993, 164–179). The existence of age-classes and of a large number of chariots point to warfare as an aristocratic occupation, and Aristotle compares the “common mess-tables of its Comradeships” with the Lacedaemonian “common messes” (*Politics* 1272 b 33–4). For him, at least, the *syssitia* were some kind of aristocratic institution, and we may infer that they were connected in some way to fraternities of warriors, which is another way of saying that they were a remnant of a society in which martial skills and valor were valued. There was even a so-called sacred band, an aristocratic group of warriors. It was annihilated in the late fourth century, but by then it had outlived its times.

State Tasks

Religion

It was the foremost duty of every ancient state to serve the gods and to secure their goodwill. The state supplied the ships bringing the *theōroi*, religious envoys, and the first fruits to Melqart of Tyre; certain gods were worshiped publicly and ex officio, and the introduction of an official cult for a foreign god was a public matter (Diodorus 14.77.5). Sacrifices had to be provided for the state cults, and the state had to build temples for these gods. Sacrificial tariffs were a public matter, arranged by a group of thirty. The priests were no magistrates, even though they were held in high esteem: the inscriptions attest many sufetes who had served as priests, and priesthoods were evidently mentioned as social distinctions.

The City

The administration of Carthage itself was one of the foremost duties of the state. Urban planning and urban infrastructure needed a central authority, which occupied itself with these problems since earliest times. All kinds of metal processing and other handicrafts, some of them using fire, were concentrated at the periphery of the city—certainly not by chance. The rectangular street grid, in evidence from the fifth century on, the harbors, the city walls, and their gates were part of a general arrangement, and urban planning is in evidence on the slopes of Byrsa in the early second century. When the water supply was on the verge of becoming insufficient, everybody built underground cisterns instead of wells: this might have been a regulated process, too.

Carthage

The embellishment of the city was also a task of the government: it erected temples and public buildings (for the assembly of the councils, an agora, and public (p. 376) baths: Valerius Maximus 5.5 ext. 4) and decorated them with works of art and monuments to remember Carthaginian victories. And, last but not least: “In normal times Carthage must have had its municipal domestic garbage collectors” (Lancel 1995, 159; Docter 2005, 269ff.).

Defense

The defense of the city was the concern of many treaties and diplomatic endeavors, but there was also the maintenance of the fleet, of garrisons, and—in certain cases—of armies, which put a heavy strain on Carthaginian finances. Carthage built its own defenses: the recently excavated seawall of the fifth century was designed to impress any arrival, as was the triple land wall (some of it was used to house stables and magazines for state-manufactured weapons). The building of small coastal forts and garrisons was coordinated, because the defense of the territory against attacks from the sea or by nomadic tribes could not be left to ad hoc responses.

The maintenance of the fleet was an ongoing source of activities (in general: Medas 2000; Barkaoui 2003). Ships had to be built, and therefore the state needed shipyards, which had to be supplied with material. The dockyards worked, at least in the third century, in a manner reminiscent of an assembly line (Frost 1976), which allowed for a rapid outturn of ships (perhaps two a day, Strabo 17.3.15). The ships needed sheds, and such structures existed necessarily from the fifth century on (Diodorus 15.73.3), but we do not know their exact location: the great harbors, which still dominate the landscape of modern Carthage, were only built in the second century (Hurst 1994).

Chariots and ships can only be handled if the charioteers and rowers are constantly trained (the same is true for the phalanx, but to a lesser degree). This training had to be organized and must have emphasized the importance of military accomplishments.

Revenue

The Carthaginian subjects paid tributes and taxes, but—perhaps—not the citizens themselves. At least some of the taxes were paid in kind, since they were assessed according to the crop-yield. Tolls will have been levied, not only in the harbor of Carthage, but also in the other harbors under Carthaginian rule and at the borders of their empire. We have only meager evidence on the sums obtained thus (Livy 34.62.3; Polybius 31.21.8). Some mines were run by the state and produced a large income, but it is not sure if the state exercised regalia on every mine and quarry. As war indemnity was paid (to Rome, for instance), war indemnities were received, too (Diodorus 15.17.5; Orosius 4.9.9), and spoils of war were added to the income of the state.

Carthage

(p. 377) Even if tolls were part of the city's income, there is no evidence that Carthage tried to improve, increase, or protect trade for trade's sake. The known treaties have no provisions in this regard and the idea of a blockade of the straits of Gibraltar, resting on more than feeble evidence, has been turned down (Barceló 1988). Trade did not belong to the tasks recognized by Carthage.

Provisions

Every ancient city had to procure provisions for its inhabitants. This could take different forms: a long-term policy could secure provisions through the taxes of an empire, concentration on crops needed for the alimentation, or colonization in fertile areas, to name but a few Carthaginian practices. The government had a direct hand in the provisioning of the population only in times of dire straits, arranging imports from Sardinia or Sicily. This implies a certain state control of the market, such as a guarantee of measurements and weights, a certain guarantee for market transactions, the procurement of a place, and laws and magistrates occupied with the market.

Coinage

Coinage facilitates the collecting of taxes and provisioning of a city, but the first Carthaginian coins were minted only around 410 for the use on Sicily, where the Carthaginians had to compete with the Greeks for the service of mercenaries. This minting continued till the middle of the fourth century, and some of the mints may have belonged to military camps. At the beginning of the third century, Carthaginian control grew stricter and some of the local mints closed down. Minting for military purposes continued in Barcid Spain, where the Carthaginians used the image of Melqart (of Gades) on their coins (on Carthaginian numismatics: Jenkins and Lewis 1963; Jenkins 1969; Jenkins 1971–1978; latest survey in Alfaro and Burnett 2003).

Carthage started minting coins for its own use only around the middle of the fourth century. The production started with gold and bronze coins; silver coins were minted only at the beginning of the First Punic war. After the second Punic war, the Carthaginians minted a monometallic bronze coinage, and a return to precious metal occurred just before the beginning of the third war against Rome.

The Aristocracy

An aristocracy ran Carthage (cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1293 b 14–16). Was it homogenous, as the small council or the strong incentive to act unanimously so as not to call on the people's assembly imply? Was it a closed group, or was it open and (p. 378) changed its composition constantly? Were there tensions—not only created by personal strife or the

Carthage

need to check an all-important single family, like the Magonids, but also by different views on Carthaginian long-term politics? These questions are almost impossible to answer.

The aristocracy was homogenous enough to block effectively any attempt at a tyranny—either through the creation of new institutions (the 100, for instance) or through violence exacted in complete consensus with the people. Many people emphasized their ancestry, naming fathers, grandfathers, and their highest office—but no pedigree exceeds four generations. This agrees with a strong, competitive vein in the lifestyle of the aristocracy, obtaining prestige from their success in warfare, the magistracies held, the wealth acquired, and the money spent for their own representation and for the people: conspicuous consumption, conspicuous spending, and “euergetisme” are present. Personal enmities are to be expected—even if we have very few clues to their existence. Political groups with a common political strategy or aim did not exist.

Wealth conferred social status and was important in securing magistracies, and in their desire for wealth instead of virtue the Carthaginian and the Spartan societies resembled each other—as Aristotle noted. The only evidence on the source of this wealth points to agriculture: the aristocracy owned large tracts of land, possibly cultivated by slaves. If the acquisition of wealth influenced the ideas and politics of the aristocracy, this is where we should look.

Conclusion

What made Carthage successful? There is no simple answer to this question, and even if Carthage did not adapt its constitution to the needs of a large territory with a larger and more diverse population, it was by no means static. A growing population—as witnessed by urban development—was one of the moving factors of Carthage’s expansion: it presented means as well as an incentive to search for further territories in order to secure agricultural surplus for the provisioning of the population (and the possibility of colonization). At the same time, this brought Carthage in much closer contact with many other cities or tribes. Certain aspects of the Carthaginian state had to change: mostly the way its relations with foreigners were conducted. The power of the aristocracy was diverted into channels created by the state: aristocratic rule meant a rule within acknowledged constitutional frameworks, but within frameworks that favored the exercise of authority by a numerically small group. This framework, or constitution, remained quite stable till the fall of Carthage—and for that reason some political theorists of the fourth and third centuries classified Carthage among one of the (rare) states with a mixed constitution.

It is perhaps easy to explain the failure of any attempt at a tyranny, but this is at least an indication for the lack of major interior crises. The fact that not only (p. 379) was the aristocracy opposed to such attempts but also that the people took part in countering

Carthage

them, too, is at least interesting. Aristocratic rule was also stable, because there was no important, long-term attempt at increasing the rights of the citizen-body (democratization). According to common experiences, the frequent enrollment of the people in the army and navy should have given them some kind of political leverage, and one might argue that the (theoretically) great authority of the people's assembly reflects this fact. But this authority was used only reluctantly and in cases of discord between council and magistrates: the assembly was a counterbalance against a—possibly—all too complacent aristocracy, but no political group used the appeal to the people as a constant instrument, and there is no sign at all of the people having developed some kind of political interest, as it used to be the case in cities, where the volume of political decision-making of the assembly was greater.

The government was intent on enriching the people (Aristotle, *Politics* 1273 b 18–20; 1320 b 5–9; cf. 1316 b 5), and it used the means provided by empire: not only the aristocracy, but also the people benefited materially from Carthaginian rule, and therefore the people acquiesced in the rule of the aristocracy. Enriching the people at the subjects' expense provided stability for Carthage—the rationale behind the sharp division between citizens and subjects: any integration of the subjects into the state, for instance by means of large-scale citizenship grants, would have reduced the possibility for the exploitation of subjects and would thus have endangered the enrichment of the people—and the rule of the aristocracy.

This had its consequences: Carthage always retained the status of a city with its limited possibilities. Its subjects never identified themselves with Carthage—and this holds true for many Punic cities, too. Carthage was not able to create a tightly knit empire (and, perhaps, this is one of the reasons why Hannibal did not understand Roman Italy). Carthaginian rule was not popular, and their—especially African—subjects often revolted against them, but the Carthaginians were able to suppress any attempt at independence.

The Carthaginians had not adapted their state to their status as masters of a large empire: at least they developed no bureaucracy (or magistracies) to deal with its administration in a thorough and competent way. This is in line with an aristocratic regime: since the higher magistracies entailed a seat in one of the councils, their number couldn't be multiplied at will—or the nature of the aristocracy would have changed. Wherever possible, then, they left the local administration in the hand of the locals but did not allow them to join their own ranks. The reward for supporting and maintaining Carthaginian rule was meager. The subjects were at least partly protected against threats from the exterior (especially on Sicily), but—of course—they had still to bear a large part of this protection by paying taxes or getting drafted into an army.

Carthage was the metropolis of a large region (Ameling 2006), drawing people to the city and offering them a livelihood. Carthaginian products can be found in the city's hinterland, but we lack the evidence to interpret this as some kind of redistribution. Carthage was a market for the products of others. This was a (p. 380) normal function for a city of this size, but was not supported by political action, or by any kind of economic or

Carthage

commercial policy. We assumed a common civil law for a part of the empire, which will have made transactions—both commercial and private—easier, but there is no evidence at all for the next logical step: a common jurisdiction or at least a jurisdiction with courts of appeal and a supreme court in Carthage. We do not know enough about the duties of the territorial administration in Africa to assert confidently that there was an assize system. Where there was no common civil law, local autonomy will have provided its own set of rules. Rewards for cooperation were not too conspicuous if you did not belong to the ruling city itself: not even the elites of the Greek or Punic cities were acknowledged as a vital part of this empire. Carthage's one advantage was the lack of a common identity among her subjects: even the Libyans were no uniform group, and it is perhaps significant that their most important revolt took place after many thousands of them had served for a long time in the Carthaginian army.

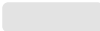
The distances between the different parts of the Carthaginian empire, the different legal status of its components, and differences in languages, religion, and history all resulted in a lack of unity in this empire (the army, at least the army of the second Punic war, might have been different—but it consisted not only of citizens and subjects). Not even success in war supplied a bond between them. Carthaginian identity, then, is the identity of the citizens and inhabitants of Carthage itself: unfortunately, again, we can only guess at the way such an identity was expressed. The cult of the gods had to be one of the foremost means of forming it, the common material culture even in its Hellenized version was another. Reconstructions of the city show that monumental architecture reinforced the way the city wanted to be seen. The role of literature cannot be appraised, but language certainly was important.

Carthage's end is inextricably bound up with the question of Roman imperialism and Roman behavior in the middle of the second century. Its ruling aristocracy died with its city, but the long years of the Third Punic war had shown without any reasonable doubt that the Carthaginians had identified themselves with their city, its history, and its traditions. The life of most other African cities continued almost unchanged—many of them had seen the light and had sworn allegiance to Rome. It is mostly due to them that the Punic language and religion survived, but their survival proves also how deeply ingrained these common Phoenician and Punic features had become in Africa—not solely, but at least in some degree as a response to the centuries of Carthage's presence.

References

Alfaro, C., and A. Burnett, eds. 2003. *A survey of numismatic research 1996-2001*. Madrid.

Alvar, J., and C. G. Wagner. 1985. "Consideraciones históricas sobre la fundación de Cartago." *Gérion* 3: 79-97.

 Ameling, W., 1993. *Karthago*. Munich.

- . 2006. "Die "neue Stadt": Karthago, Kolonie und "Mutterstadt" im westlichen Mittelmeer." In J.-C. Golvin, ed., *Metropolen der Antike* 2. Aufl., 83–90. Darmstadt.
- Aubet, M. E. 1993. *The Phoenicians and the West*. Cambridge.
- Barceló, P. A. 1988. *Karthago und die iberische Halbinsel vor den Barkiden*. Bonn.
- Barkaoui, A. 2003. *La marine carthaginoise*. Tunis.
- Bengtson, H. 1975. *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums II*. 2nd ed. Munich.
- Bickerman, E. 1985. *Religion and politics in the Hellenistic and Roman periods*. Como.
- Docter, R. F. 2002/3. "The topography of archaic Carthage." *Talanta* 34/5: 113–133.
- . 2005. "The koprologoi of Carthage." In *Atti del V congresso internazionale di studi fenici e punici*, 269–276. Palermo.
- Docter, R. F., H. G. Niemeyer, A. J. Nijboer, and H. van der Plicht. 2005. "Radiocarbon dates of animal bones in the earliest levels of Carthage." In G. Bartoloni and F. Delpino, eds., *Oriente e Occidente*, 557–575. Pisa.
- Donner, H., and W. Röllig. 1962. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Wiesbaden.
- Dubuisson, M. 1992. "L'image du carthaginois dans la littérature latine." *Studia Phoenicia* 1/2: 159–167.
- Fantar, M. 1992. "La Tunisie punique I." *Studi di Egittologia e di Antichità puniche* 11: 87–105.
- . 1993. "La Tunisie punique II." *Studi di Egittologia e di Antichità puniche* 12: 93–129.
- Fariselli, A. C. 2002. *I mercenari di Cartagine*. La Spezia.
- Ferjaoui, A. 1991. "A propos des inscriptions mentionnant les sufètes et les rabs dans la généalogie des dédicants à Carthage." In *Atti del II congresso internazionale di studi fenici e punici*. Vol. 2, 478–483. Rome.
- . 1993. *Recherches sur les relations entre l'Orient phénicien et Carthage*. Göttingen.
- Frost, H. 1976. *Lilybaeum (Marsala): The Punic ship*. *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 30 Supplement.
- Garbini, G. 1983. "Considerazioni conclusive." In *Fenici e Arabi nel Mediterraneo*, 153–166. Rome.
- Hans, L. M. 1983. *Karthago und Sizilien*. Hildesheim.

Carthage

- Heuss, A. 1943. "Die Gestaltung des römischen und karthagischen Staates bis zum Pyrrhos-Krieg." In J. Vogt, ed., *Rom und Karthago*, 83–138. Leipzig.
- Hurst, H. R. 1994. *Excavations at Carthage: The British Mission*, vol. 2: *The circular harbour, north side*. Oxford.
- Huss, W. 1983. "Der karthagische Sufetat." In H. Heinen, ed., *Althistorische Studien H. Bengtson zum 70. Geburtstag*, 24–43. Wiesbaden.
- . 1985. *Geschichte der Karthager*. Munich.
- . 1997. "Noch einmal: die karthagischen 'Könige.'" *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 25: 139–151.
- Huxley, G. L., 2003. "Counterproposal at Carthage (Aristotle, *Politics* II.11.5–6)." In G. W. Bakewell and J. P. Sickinger, eds., *Gestures: Essays...presented to A. L. Boegehold*, 281–283. Oxford.
- Jenkins, G. K. 1969. *SNG Kopenhagen Nordafrika—Mauretanien*. Copenhagen.
- . 1971–1978. "Coins of Punic Sicily." *Swiss Numismatic Review* 50: 25–78; 53: 23–41; 56: 5–65; 57: 5–68.
- (p. 382) Jenkins, G. K., and R. B. Lewis. 1963. *Carthaginian gold and electrum coins*. London.
- Koch, M. 2000. "Karthago und Hispanien in vorbarkidischer Zeit," *Madriider Mitteilungen* 41: 162–177.
- Krings, V. 1998. *Carthage et les Grecs c. 580—480 av. J.-C.* Leiden.
- Lancel, S. 1995. *Carthage*. London.
- Leidl, C. 1996. *Appians Darstellung des 2. punischen Krieges in Spanien (Iberike c. 1–38 § 1–158a): Text und Kommentar*. Munich.
- Lund, J. 1988. "Prolegomena to a study of the Phoenician/Punic colonization of Tunesia." *Acta Hyperborea* 1: 44–57.
- Manfredi, L. I. 1993. "La coltura del ceriali in éta punica in Sardegna e Nord-Africa." *Quaderni. Soprintendenza per i beni archeologici delle province di Cagliari e Oristano* 10: 191–218.
- . 1999. "Carthaginian policy through coins." In G. Pisano, ed., *Phoenicians and Carthaginians in the Western Mediterranean*, 69–78. Rome.
- . 2003. *La politica amministrativa di Cartagine in Africa*. Rome.
- Medas, S. 2000. *La marineria cartaginese*. Sassari.

Carthage

- Moscatti, S. 1994. "L'espansione di Cartagine sul territorio africano." *Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Rendiconti della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*: 203-214.
- Niehr, H. 1986. *Herrschen und Richten*. Würzburg.
- Picard, G. 1966. L'administration territoriale de Carthage. In *Mélanges Piganiol*. Vol. 3. Paris: 1257-1265.
- Répertoire 1914. Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*. Vol. II. Paris.
- Scardigli, B. 1991. *I trattati Romano-Cartaginesi*. Pisa.
- Schmitt, H. H. 1969. *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums III*. Munich.
- Scott-Kilvert, I., trans. 1979. *Polybius. The rise of the Roman Empire*. London.
- Sznycer, M. 1992. "Die 'Volksversammlung' in den punischen Städten im Lichte der epigraphischen Zeugnisse." In W. Huss, ed., *Karthago*, 262-290. Darmstadt.
- . 1995. "La cité punique d'après les sources épigraphiques." *Semitica* 43/4: 103-109.
- . 1999. "Une inscription néopunique de la région de Maktar." *Semitica* 48: 41-59.
- . 2003. "L'inscription punique dite 'urbanistique' de Carthage." *Semitica* 51: 31-55.
- van Dommelen, P., 2006. "Punic farms and Carthaginian colonists." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 19: 7-28.
- Wagner, C. G., and J. Alvar. 1989. "Fenicios en Occidente, la colonización agrícola." *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 17: 61-102.
- Wollner, B. 1987. *Die Kompetenzen der karthagischen Feldherren*. Frankfurt.

Walter Ameling

Walter Ameling is Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cologne. Besides Carthage, he is mainly interested in the Eastern Roman Empire, its religions, and its inscriptions.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Henrik Mouritsen

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Roman History, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0015

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the Roman Empire as a republic, explaining the formation of the Roman republic, its durability and relative stability, and the military expansionism that allowed it to expand its territory. It also identifies the social, political, and military factors that led to the weakening of the republican system of government and its eventual replacement with the monarchy system.

Keywords: Roman Empire, Roman republic, military expansionism, republican system, monarchy system

The Roman republic, according to the conventional chronology, was founded in 509 and lasted until 31 BCE, when Octavian's victory at Actium paved the way for the introduction of the Augustan principate. This time span made it one of the most durable political structures known in antiquity to be based on a system of publicly negotiated power sharing. Its longevity stands out as one of the two most remarkable features of the Roman republic, the other being its exceptional expansionism. Thus, during the republic the Roman state grew from a small city-state in Latium to a large territorial state that covered the entire Italian peninsula. Its population expanded correspondingly from a few hundred thousand to several million. It was also the Roman republic that established the overseas empire, which eventually comprised most of the Mediterranean world and Western Europe and outlived the republic by almost half a millennium (See Map 14.1.).

This chapter will be structured around these two issues and try to explain firstly the durability and relative stability that characterized the Roman republic and secondly its military expansionism and ability to extend its territory and citizen body. Although the two central questions remain distinct, the answers, as we shall see, are closely

connected. Finally we will briefly consider the eventual collapse of the republican system and the emergence of monarchy, outlining the political, social, and military processes that led to a gradual weakening of the republican form of government.

(p. 384)

The Formation of the Roman Republic

The earliest stages in the formation of the Roman republic are lost in time. According to the canonical version of events, not finalized until the late first century BCE, an uprising headed by Junius Brutus led to the expulsion of the last king in 510, and the following year the first two consuls were elected by popular vote. This revolution ushered in a new system of government that in principle would last until the late first century BCE. Thus, the list of chief magistrates, the so-called *Fasti*, traced a continuous succession of paired consuls (or varying numbers of consular tribunes during the fourth-century “struggle of the orders”) from the expulsion of the kings to the age of Augustus.

The reality is likely to have been considerably more complex and the transition from kingship to republic probably far less clear-cut (Cornell 1995). The traditional date is, for example, likely due to a later historiographical invention, inspired by the contemporary overturn of the Athenian tyranny. Today only a vague outline of this process can be reconstructed and modern historians remain deeply divided on almost every issue. Most of our information comes from much later sources—the first historical accounts were not written until the third century BCE, when Timaeus (ca. 350–260) and later Fabius Pictor (late third century) composed the first (now lost) histories of Rome. The surviving sources are nearly all from the last generation of the republic or the early or even high empire, which further complicates any attempt to reconstruct the early political history of the republic. Given the paucity of contemporary documentary or archaeological evidence to elucidate the question, it is difficult to see how a scholarly consensus can ever be achieved. Virtually all aspects of early Roman history are open to dispute, and here only a very broad and tentative outline will be attempted, mostly based on inferences from later, better-documented periods, above all institutional “survivals,” that is, relics of previous evolutionary stages that were preserved in the classical republican constitution.

The Roman “Constitution”

The Roman Empire I: The Republic



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 14.1 The Roman Empire circa 60 BCE

Republican Rome did not have a constitution in the modern sense so much as a set of practices and conventions, whose authority increased over time and eventually gained the status of hallowed ancestral custom. Thus, despite continuous evolution no institution or

practice was, as far as we know, ever formally abolished. Instead they were drained of political significance and left as empty constitutional shells. Informing the political practices and conventions of republican Rome were a set of fundamental concerns, all focused on the spreading of power and the prevention of undue influence being concentrated in the hands of a single individual or small groups of families. These concerns dictated the shape given to individual (p. 385) (p. 386) institutions and procedures and defined the political character of the Roman republic as a whole.

The early republic appears to have had a relatively simple political structure based on the tripartite model of magistrates, council, and assembly, typical of many ancient city-states. Executive powers were in the hands of annual magistrates, who were elected by a popular assembly to which all male adult citizens formally had access although the influence of some groups was highly restricted. During their year in office the magistrates were supposed to take advice from a permanent body of elders, the senate, which was itself mostly composed of former magistrates. Laws were proposed by the magistrates in cooperation with the senate and passed by the assemblies. The *populus* remained the only source of political legitimacy in the Roman state, all laws and appointments requiring the approval of the assembly. However, the precise nature of the people's power will be further explored below. Only in one sphere of the Roman constitution did an alternative source of authority exist, since in all matters concerning state religion the senate had the final say.

Magistrates

The chief magistracy was during the historical periods the consulship, an eponymous post filled annually by two men. The situation in the earliest periods is uncertain, and the dual consulship may possibly be a later invention introduced in 367 to allow power sharing between two competing social groups, the patricians and plebeians. The original number of chief magistrates is disputed, but it seems likely that their title was praetor rather than consul. The Romans invested immense power in their chief magistrates, who held what was known as *imperium*. Their tenure of office was short but during that period they held the ultimate authority in the Roman state. Unlike Greek officials, Roman magistrates were not simply citizens who briefly performed a public service on behalf of the community. During their term in office they held an “autonomous” authority over the people, to whom they were formally superior, hence the term *magistratus* derived from “greater.”

Over time more offices were introduced to cope with the increased scale and complexity of Roman society. A quinquennial office was, according to tradition, introduced in 443 to conduct the census. It was the censors’ task to register all citizens and assess their property. As part of this operation the two officeholders would also revise the membership of the senate. They had the power to censure individual citizens for both public and private misconduct.

In 366 the first praetor was elected, whose main responsibility was the administration of justice (Brennan 2000). The praetor also held *imperium*, which enabled him to command armies, but his authority was less than that of the consuls, whose functions in the city he would take over when they were away on military campaigns. Later praetores would be appointed to govern overseas provinces, and their (p. 387) number was steadily expanded following the growth of the empire, reaching a total of eight in 81 BCE.

Quaestors were traditionally the assistants to the consuls, and had originally been directly appointed, but later they were chosen by the tribal assembly. They were in charge of financial administration, and their number was steadily raised from the original two to twenty in the early first century BCE. In addition a large number of lower officials were also appointed annually, covering a wide range of administrative responsibilities. Thus, by the late republic almost one hundred individual positions were filled by popular vote each year. The magistrates were assisted by a limited “civil service,” which comprised only a few handfuls of administrators and assistants, *apparitores*, and a number of state slaves, *servi publici*. To a great extent therefore they used their own private servants while carrying out state business. Public office was nonremunerated and the holders generally had to pay for their own staff. As a matter of course only those belonging to the propertied classes could therefore hold office. It is uncertain whether there was a formal property qualification for magistrates until the late republic.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

The magistrates' power was founded on a mandate granted by the *populus*. It is common to describe the procedure by which this authority was bestowed as a "popular election" but that needs to be qualified. Technically the process involved both the presiding magistrate and the assembly, which would jointly appoint the successor, and the procedures followed may suggest that the people's role originally was acclamatory rather than elective.

Assemblies

Over time Rome developed a bewildering number of popular assemblies, *comitia*, each with its own distinct organization and functions. The earliest Roman assembly was the *comitia curiata*, the assembly of *curiae*, which were divisions of the citizen body whose precise nature now eludes us. In historical times there were thirty *curiae*, ten for each of the three tribes into which the Roman people originally were distributed. Presumably all citizens were members of one of these units, hence the traditional designation of the Roman citizen body as *Quirites*, members of a *curia*. This has been disputed for the earlier periods, but certainly for the late republic membership seems to have been universal. Little is known about their political role in the early republic, apart from passing the *lex curiata* that formally granted *imperium* to the chief magistrates. Later this became a pure formality without actual popular participation, since each *curia* would be represented by a *lictor*.

It is widely assumed that the procedure was acclamatory also in its earlier stages. The new magistrate(s?) would be presented to the *comitia* and receive its formal approval. There was probably no vote, and no choice of candidates would be offered. The acclamation was in principle unanimous, and the process was at the same time a conferral of political legitimacy and a declaration of allegiance to the new leader.

(p. 388) The *comitia curiata* introduced what would become one of the most distinctive features of Roman political procedure, the practice of block voting. The magistrate would be presented to each *curia* separately in order to receive its public declaration of support. It meant that politically the voice of each citizen would be heard only as part of a group that would express a single opinion or verdict. This unique principle would be applied universally to all Roman assemblies, where collective units rather than individual citizens would count. It gave political participation in Rome an abstract quality, which stands in sharp contrast to the Greek world where citizens always were politically active as individuals. The political body in Rome was not defined as the sum of its citizens but of the units into which they had been distributed. So long as all these units took part in the proceedings the entire *populus* was formally present and could take decisions binding for the whole population. Thus, it only took a handful of citizens from each unit to constitute the Roman people politically. The formalism highlighted by this practice underscores the strong ritual aspect of all public proceedings in Rome.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Political initiative lay in the hands of the magistrate who presided over the meeting. The people could not act without formal leadership or even convene. They could not debate current issues and they could not make any suggestions, nor could they alter or reformulate proposals. Their role was purely reactive, reduced to a simple “yes” or “no,” and they could in principle only affirm or withhold their support. Thus, it is striking that the Latin word for vote, *suffragium*, only has a positive meaning of lending support. There was no word in the Latin language for the exercise of political choice by the *populus*, only the expression of approval. Following the pattern provided by the *comitia curiata* a number of other assemblies were developed over time, including the *comitia centuriata*, the *comitia tributa*, and the *concilium plebis*, which will all be dealt with below.

The Senate

Former magistrates could from the middle republic onward expect to gain a seat in the council of elders, the senate, whose constitutional role was primarily advisory. During most of the republic it was made up of 300 members who in practice were appointed for life (at least after 318), although they could be expelled by the censors for misconduct. In the late republic the membership was doubled to 600, probably to enable it to cope better with the extended judicial responsibilities its members had been given. Senators normally belonged to the propertied classes; indeed they could be expelled for bankruptcy, which equaled immoral behavior.

Their meetings were presided over by the consuls (and in their absence praetors), and they could issue resolutions, so-called *senatus consulta*, that would instruct the magistrates to take specific actions. Their meetings and debates appear to have been conducted according to a formalized set of procedures, which mirrored the internal hierarchy of status and seniority within the senate. While the senate had no (p. 389) legislative powers, its approval, covered in the elusive concept of *auctoritas patrum*, was apparently required for new laws to be fully valid, at least in the centuriate assembly, although much remains uncertain. This gave it a central role in the constitution, as reflected in the dyadic definition of the Roman state as *Senatus Populusque Romanus*. The simple fact that the senate represented the only permanent deliberative body in the Roman republic, which counted among its members most men with practical political and military experience, also gave it an influence that went far beyond its formal powers. Traditionally the senate was responsible for negotiations with foreign powers, and embassies sent to Rome were therefore received in the senate. It was also the senate that allocated resources to magistrates. As noted above, the senate held supreme authority in just one sphere of Roman public life, which was that of religion, and to understand better this distribution of powers we will have to consider that particular aspect of the Roman republic more broadly.

Religion in the Roman State

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

The Roman republic was characterized by the almost complete integration of religious and political authority. Politics and religion did not represent distinct spheres of public life, and any attempt to separate them is therefore anachronistic (Beard, North, and Price 1998). Religious functions, including sacrifice, prayer, and divination, were entrusted to a number of designated priesthoods, whose members generally held their position for life. They were divided into three main bodies, the *pontifices*, the augurs, and the *decemviri*, in addition to several lesser priesthoods. The *pontifices* were headed by the *pontifex maximus* and among their members were several priests dedicated to specific deities. The augurs were chiefly responsible for divinatory procedures, and the *decemviri* (later expanded to *quindecimviri*) for the consultation of a collection of oracular texts, known as the Sibylline Books.

Divination and the taking of *auspicia* were fully integrated into the life of the Roman republic, which developed what may have been the most extensive as well as complex system for gauging the will of the gods known in any ancient society. Consultation of the gods was a natural part of all public proceedings, and it preceded every collective action or initiative as well as military engagements. The elaborate system of divinatory procedures and rituals ensured that the gods remained favorable and that *pax deorum*, peace with the tutelary gods of the Roman people, was preserved. They provided a framework for the interpretation and decoding of omens and other divine messages, and offered tried and tested means of assuaging divine anger and averting the dangers it posed.

Declaring war was in essence a religious procedure in Rome, carried out by members of a separate priestly college, the *Fetiales*, specifically dedicated to this task. The ritual they performed was crucial to the legality of a war, determining whether it could be regarded as *bellum iustum*, a concept that is therefore best understood as a “correctly declared” rather than “just” war (Harris 1984).

(p. 390) Given their crucial importance for the survival of the community, it was logical that matters relating to the gods be the responsibility of the leaders of the state, and priests were generally drawn from the ranks of the senators and officeholders. Priests fulfilled a role as religious experts with privileged knowledge of ritual practice and the interpretation of signs, on the basis of which they would make their recommendations, but it was the senate that would take the final decision on all religious issues, including those relating to cult and divination.

Originally the religious authority of the senate had been the exclusive privilege of a separate group of elite families, the patricians, who held an inherited claim to the *auspicia*, the formal communication with the gods. For that reason they also monopolized the priesthoods in the early republic. The authority entailed by this privilege can hardly be overestimated, since it gave these families a distinct responsibility for the maintenance of the vital relationship with the Roman gods.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Consultation of the gods may have been part and parcel of all public proceedings, but the procedures were also finely tuned to prevent them from paralyzing the state. The gods were not asked to approve a specific proposal or appointment but rather to approve the day on which the decision was to be taken. Thus, in case of a negative response the consequences were not final but merely meant a brief postponement until the omens were favorable and the meeting could go ahead as planned. The implication was that all actions carried an element of divine sanction, which nevertheless remained oblique. Historians have drawn parallels between the consultation of the gods and the *populus*. They were both crucial for the legitimacy of any public action but at the same time also highly ritualized and managed through a set of procedures carefully designed to produce a positive response (Scheid 2003).

The Early Roman State

The Roman state was in many respects “primitive,” in the sense that the Romans did not conceptualize the state as distinct from the Roman people. Thus, the term used to designate the “state” was *res publica*, meaning the “public affairs” or “affairs of the *populus*,” and these “affairs” were largely confined to the areas of justice and security. The Roman state (in the modern sense) had very limited scope, essentially just concerning itself with law, public order, justice, and security, the latter comprising both secure borders and peace with the gods. Beyond these basic responsibilities the state rarely involved itself in the lives of its citizens. All expenditure was focused on financing the army, religion, and a few public services such as sewers, public buildings, and water supply. Very limited funds were therefore raised through taxation. The main source of revenue was the tribute, which was levied on the basis of a census conducted every five years. Each citizen would then make a monetary declaration of his wealth to the censors. Other sources of state income were state contracts and leases, managed by the same officials, and above all the revenues accrued from successful warfare abroad.

(p. 391) Law and Order: Conflict and Coercion

The magistrates exercised a monopoly of physical force. Magistrates with *imperium* originally held the power of life and death, as symbolized in the *fasces* composed of rods and axes, carried by their bodyguard of *lictors*. Increasingly the arbitrary application of these powers was restricted through the introduction of legal safeguards that protected citizens against physical punishment and execution. Laws were passed that guaranteed the rights to a proper trial before the ultimate penalty could be imposed. Roman citizens gained the *ius provocandi ad populum*, which allowed them to appeal to the people, at least from 300 BCE, and capital trials were then held in the popular assembly. Eventually this right was also extended to the military sphere. Despite these limitations the magistrates still had a number of means by which to coerce the citizens, including the imposition of fines, temporary imprisonment, and confiscation of property. These powers,

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

however, were apparently used mostly to police the behavior of the ruling class rather than the masses (Nippel 1995).

The pursuit of justice was in principle a private matter, and the state would only actively pursue cases of treason and other serious threats to the state, although the *tresviri capitales*, primarily responsible for organizing a fire brigade of public slaves, had some role to play in criminal cases. The role of the state was to provide a framework for citizens seeking justice. Criminal disputes were originally held in the centuriate assembly and later in public courts presided over by a magistrate. Jurors would deliver the verdict. Gradually a more complex system was developed with standing courts, *quaestiones*, dealing with different types of crimes. The proceedings involved speakers from both sides of the dispute, and legal advocacy became one of the main functions of the Roman patronage system. Civil cases would be resolved by an *iudex*, appointed by a magistrate.

The Roman state was exceptional in the degree to which it delegated coercive powers to the heads of individual family units. The *pater familias* held absolute authority over all those under his *potestas*, including the power of life and death, *ius vitae necisque*. His authority also covered the entire family estate. The extent of the *patria potestas* meant there were similarities between the position of children *in potestate* and slaves, the former distinguished as *liberi* to indicate their status as free members of the household as opposed to the unfree *servi*.

The maintenance of public order was structured according to a religious distinction between the city of Rome and the territories outside of the city. Rome was surrounded by a ritual boundary, the *pomerium*, inside of which no armed force was allowed. It was in principle as well as in practice a demilitarized zone, where only the bodyguards of the chief magistrates holding *imperium*, twelve *lictores* for consuls, and two or six for praetors were permitted. The only exception was made for triumphal processions when the victorious army would cross the *pomerium* and march along the triumphal route from the Campus Martius to the Capitol. The absence of a permanent military presence in Rome probably reflected political as much as religious concerns, since the existence of a standing force would have (p. 392) posed a latent threat to the republican form of shared government. However, it also made that system highly vulnerable to any armed challenge against which it would have been largely powerless, the *lictores* serving a mostly symbolic function.

Faced with the rise in political violence in the late republic, the senate in 121 introduced the so-called final decree, *senatus consultum ultimum*, which asked the consuls to take any action necessary to protect the state against harm. Senators and *equites* then armed themselves and their servants, also using an auxiliary force against their political opponents. This procedure was repeated on several occasions during the late republic, when the senate assumed the authority to suspend established civic rights in the interest of the state. It did so by legitimizing the use of violence by some citizens against others, who were deemed guilty of *seeditio* and condemned as enemies of the state.

Civil and Military Power

Civilian and military institutions were not clearly separated apart from the religious distinction between *domi militiae*, mentioned above (Rüpke 1990). Thus, the highest state officials were in effect the commanders-in-chief and expected to lead the army during their term in office. It was therefore not by modern standards a “civil” office. The army was in principle inseparable from the citizen body, since it was structured as a militia in which all adult male citizens were obliged to serve. In practice, however, only those who were of military age and able to arm themselves would be called up for active duty under normal circumstances (although an exception was made for freedmen who were de facto treated as *proletarii*). The citizen body was divided into *iuniores* and *seniores*, who would serve separately. Property was relevant because soldiers were expected to provide their own armor, although they would receive remuneration (*stipendium*) when they were in the field. The Roman citizens were therefore classified according to their property, originally into two categories, *classis* and *infra classem*, the former comprising those qualified to serve and the latter those who fell below the property qualification. Later this simple system was refined through the introduction of five different infantry classes based on a graduated scale of property requirements. The cavalry, or *equites*, were apparently selected from among the richest members of the first class, while at the bottom, below the classes, were the *proletarii*, whose lack of property normally excluded them from military service, although they could be called up for garrison or galley duties.

This complex stratified structure did not reflect a functional differentiation within the army, but it was closely linked to its political role. Thus, the army could convene as a political body, in the form of the so-called *comitia centuriata*. Formally representing the citizens under arms, it had to meet outside the *pomerium* in the Campus Martius. The assembly would be called by the chief magistrate, who was also its commander. Originally the assembled crowd was asked to give the new (p. 393) leaders its support and allegiance through acclamation, and after the introduction of multiple candidates it would be asked to choose between them. In addition they would elect the other senior magistrates, the praetors and censors. Reflecting the military origins of the *comitia centuriata*, it was this assembly that would be asked to vote also on matters of war and peace.

The “Struggle of the Orders”

The later Roman sources describe a conflict between two distinct groups, patricians and plebeians, which dominated the first two centuries of the republic. Little reliable information about this period is available, and the nature of the conflict and the identity of the participants are therefore largely a matter of speculation. We cannot say for certain whether the two groups only emerged after the foundation of the republic, whether they represented a bipolar division of the entire citizen body, or if there was a third category of citizens neither plebeian nor patrician. Neither is there any agreement on whether the

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

exclusivity of the patricians dominated the state right from the beginning of the republic or if they only gradually established themselves as a ruling class. Given the state of our evidence a consensus is unlikely to be reached on these issues. What is most important for our purposes are the following aspects, on which there seems to be some agreement. Firstly, the two categories of patricians and plebeians appear to have been hereditary. Secondly, the patricians as a group claimed a distinct religious authority. Thirdly, the plebeians were—at least during some periods—excluded from state offices, civic and military as well as cultic.

The socioeconomic status of the two categories is not entirely clear. While the patricians generally are presented as rich and powerful, the plebeians seem to have covered a broader social range. Some of them belonged to the lower classes, as suggested by the requests for social and economic reforms, reported in the sources. Other demands challenged the patrician monopoly on public office, which may indicate a more elevated social status.

As part of the struggle for political equality and social concessions, the plebeians created a number of civic and religious institutions in order to promote their interests. A plebeian assembly was founded, the *concilium plebis*, convened by the *tribuni plebis*, the officials of the plebs whose primary role, according to the tradition, was to protect plebeians against patrician oppression. The tribunes were protected by a collective oath taken by the plebeian population, which made them sacrosanct. Another plebeian magistracy was the aedileship, concerned with the celebration of separate plebeian religious festivals and the maintenance of their shrines. The plebeian assembly could issue its own resolutions, so-called *plebiscita*, which were binding for the plebeian population. Their assembly was structured around the voting unit of the *tribus*, territorial divisions of the Roman state, which on the face of it may have given it a more “democratic” aspect than the timocratically organized *comitia centuriata*.

(p. 394) The patricians gradually made concessions on all fronts, and a compromise was formulated by which the plebeian leaders were admitted to almost all public offices, including the religious posts, while the plebeian institutions were recognized by the state. In 367 it was agreed that one of the consuls should be plebeian (effective from 342), and in 300 the pontificate was opened to plebeians, who were to provide half of the members.

The end result was a heterogeneous mix of official “state” posts and assemblies and separate institutions that were open only to plebeians but carried state authority. A new assembly was also introduced based on the tribal divisions but covering both plebeians and patricians, the *comitia tributa*, which would pass legislation and elect lower magistrates, aediles and quaestors, in addition to a host of minor public officials. The plebeian aedileship was in 367 matched by a similar “curule” office, which was open to patricians. Like their plebeian counterparts their main responsibility was public festivals, works, and grain supply.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Although this gradual process of plebeian-patrician integration may seem uniquely Roman, there are clear parallels to this phenomenon in the medieval city-states of central Italy, where popular movements often established rival institutions that over time were absorbed into the official constitutional framework (Finer 1997).

There is little evidence to suggest that the “struggle of the orders” represented a “democratic” challenge to the Roman state. The plebeian institutions all appear to have been molded on those of the patrician-dominated state. The relationship between assembly and magistrate was similar, again reducing the masses to a passive, reflective role. It is therefore difficult to interpret the plebeian institutions as the products of a genuinely “popular” movement emerging “from below.” Most plausibly a plebeian elite had existed at an early stage, which championed the cause of the plebeian population in general while also using the new institutions to bolster their own claims to power and equality. The main consequence of the “struggle” was a modification of the executive structures and a broadened access to public office.

Social and Political Stability in the Middle Roman Republic

The period between the end of the “struggle of the orders” in the fourth century and the first outbreak of political violence in 133 BCE is generally seen as the “classic” Roman republic, characterized by stability at home and expansion abroad. While the political stability of the middle republic may have been exaggerated by subsequent writers who looked back with nostalgia on the period before the upheaval of the late republic, there is little doubt that these were the centuries when (p. 395) the republican system worked most smoothly. A number of factors can be adduced to explain the relative stability, including the structure and ideology of the ruling class, its relationship with the people, and the conciliatory policies pursued by the ruling class. Finally the whole question of Rome’s domestic stability must be viewed against the backdrop of her external success, the continuous warfare and the increasing militarization of Roman society during this period.

The New Nobility

The “struggle of the orders” led to the formation of a new ruling class, consisting of both patricians and plebeians (Hölkeskamp 1987). In socioeconomic terms the elite had not been broadened to any significant degree, since commoners still were excluded. But the new elite, which later became known as the *nobilitas*, nevertheless marked a fundamental historical shift. Most importantly it defined itself in terms of office holding rather than

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

birth. Access to political power was no longer reserved for an exclusive elite claiming inherited privilege but was in principle open to all men of means.

The new elite therefore had a strong meritocratic element to it, but it soon assumed more traditional aristocratic features too. Thus, the personal merit represented by office holding became a distinction that could be passed on to the next generations. Thus, the *nobilitas* was defined as those families that could count a consul among their ancestors, and a man who reached the highest office would “ennoble” his family and descendants. The paradoxical result was a ruling class that founded its claim to leadership on a combination of individual achievement and inherited entitlement. The newcomers who lacked noble pedigree were labeled “new men,” *homines novi*, and the very existence of this concept underlines the hereditary element to the new office-holding class. Members of the traditional consular families had a stronger claim to succeed to the highest office. In the hundred years before 133 BCE no fewer than 99 out of 200 consulships were filled by nobles carrying just ten different family (or clan) names. By contrast, between 179 and 49 only seven “new men” from nonsenatorial families reached the consulship (with two more possible; Brunt 1982; Badian 1990a, 1990b). A few consuls came from senatorial families of lower rank, but the vast majority came from old consular families.

It is important to note, however, that despite the near monopoly on the highest posts exercised by a small core of old families, Rome’s was not a closed, hereditary elite, claiming automatic succession. Continuous tenure of the highest office over several generations was in fact the exception even among families in the inner circle. Between 249 and 50 BCE 35 percent of the consuls were not able to count another consul among their direct ancestors three generations back. Likewise for around a third of the consuls in this period we have no evidence of any sons following in their footsteps. And at the lower rungs of the senate, the turnover of families (p. 396) was probably even greater (Hopkins and Burton 1983). Several factors may explain this pattern. The high mortality rate naturally led to a steady renewal of the elite, as families or family branches became extinct. The practice of partible inheritance also contributed to this process by encouraging families to aim for a single male heir to perpetuate the name while keeping the estate intact. Frequently, however, the result was either extinction or the diminution of the family fortune, leading to a—perhaps temporary—eclipse of the families’ political representation.

The dynamic and open structure of the office-holding class not only strengthened its identity as a meritocratic elite but also helped secure its long-term survival. Oligarchic systems are vulnerable to a number of threats, which are as much internal as external. Fixed and inflexible barriers between classes are often detrimental to the long-term stability of ruling elites. In Rome the relative openness prevented the building up of resentment and opposition among rising families excluded from office and status. These could be continuously admitted, usually to the lower ranks of the senate, but they would often fall prey to the hazards mentioned above and disappear again after a few

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

generations. In this way the system could accommodate the ambitions of talented “new men” without compromising the fundamental stability of the internal power structure.

The Roman elite managed a precarious balance between total openness, which threatens the continuity of the ruling class, and the exclusivity that makes the system vulnerable to challenges from excluded or emerging groups of families outside the elite. Part of the answer to this conundrum was a multitiered structure within the elite, which consisted of several formally recognized levels—*equites*, senators, and *nobiles*. They all enjoyed distinctions of status, while most power remained in the hands of the leading families within the nobility.

The main challenge to the survival of oligarchic systems typically comes from within the ranks of the ruling class itself. The formalized sharing of power among groups of families always requires strong internal cohesion as well as effective means of enforcing collective discipline. Safeguards must be in place to prevent attempts at usurping unwarranted powers, and competition must be tightly regulated to minimize the disruption otherwise caused by open political contest. Self-policing was essential to the long-term stability of ancient oligarchic systems.

Conformity to the aristocratic ideal of power sharing was from an early age inculcated into young nobles, who were instilled with a competitive but fundamentally egalitarian ethos. This message was reinforced by stories of exemplary punishments of past leaders who had broken ranks and aspired to tyranny. Any attempt by nobles to overshadow their peers was condemned, and the elite could be ruthless in its defense of its *libertas*—defined as the freedom from the domination of a single individual or small clique. Accusations of seeking *dominatio* were the most powerful weapons in the political discourse at Rome. The consensual ideology of the elite required submission to the majority view in order to maintain internal unity, and adherence to this ideal was promoted through a culture of respect and deference for age, seniority, and experience, as also reflected in the (p. 397) hierarchical structure of the ruling class deliberative body, the senate, which facilitated unanimity and helped suppress or at least marginalize dissent.

There were also a number of institutional safeguards built into the constitution. The sharing of power was organized through very short-term office holding, and even the most senior statesmen therefore held formal authority for only a very brief period during their public careers. Gradually these careers were given a firmer structure with rules laid down for the order in which offices were to be held, the so-called *cursus honorum*. Minimum ages were also prescribed for each office by the *Lex Villia annalis*, 180 BCE, such as age forty-two for the consulship, and an interval of two years was required between the holding of different curule offices.

Access to power and honors was regulated through the process of general election, and here measures were taken to contain the potentially disruptive dynamics of open contests. The decisive influence was placed in the hands of the propertied classes, while the urban plebs in effect was deprived of any real say. Ideally in oligarchic systems the

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

access to executive power is governed by a random process that offers little opportunity for influencing the outcome. Thus, in Venice, another (later) aristocratic republic characterized by remarkable stability, an extraordinarily complex system was developed to appoint the doges, which combined election with lottery as a means of maintaining the internal equilibrium within the ruling class (Finer 1997). Rome may have tried to achieve a similar effect by choosing a single electoral unit, the *centuria praerogativa*, by lot and designating its result as a pseudo-divine indicator to the rest of the voting units. Apparently its lead was generally followed, thereby reducing the incentive for candidates to campaign extensively in an attempt to influence the result, which might have had a destabilizing effect on the elite as a whole. It also produced a much stronger mandate for the new magistrates, who would win by a clear majority, thereby reinforcing the image of a community standing united behind its leaders.

It was important not just to curb the ambitions of individual nobles and regulate their campaigning efforts but also to exercise some control over them during their time in office. This was a particular problem in Rome where magistrates held exceptionally strong powers. When magistrates stepped down they could be tried for offenses committed during their time in office, which may have helped to rein in “rogue” members of the elite.

Another problem was posed by the existence of the popular tribunate, a relic from the “struggle of the orders,” which had been incorporated into the constitution. Considerable power was invested in the tribunate, which was filled annually by ten officeholders, who at least in the middle and later republic usually were in the early stages of their careers. Not only could they present their own legislative bills directly to the assembly, but they could also veto those of others. Since they all held equal authority, their individual powers often canceled each other out, preventing any undesirable initiatives from being implemented. Their obstructive powers could be more difficult to control, and here informal pressure exercised by senior figures generally managed to bring them into line with the prevailing elite view. The age of the tribunes probably contributed since few of them would have (p. 398) been willing to jeopardize future careers on a matter of principle. However, their office was traditionally defined as the protector of the people’s interests, and when taken seriously this identity could occasionally lead to conflict between tribunes and the senatorial consensus. Tribunes could then appeal directly to the masses for support against their peers, which represents a classic crisis scenario common to most oligarchic societies. This particular problem takes us to the broader question how of the ruling class maintained social peace and long-term control over the populace.

Elite and Masses

Traditionally it was believed that the entire Roman plebs was tied to aristocratic families through a dense network of patronage, a so-called *clientela* system. This idea has since been questioned by many scholars, and there is now broad agreement that although

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

patronage relations undoubtedly played a central role in the practical functioning of Roman society, they were probably not as crucial in maintaining the political order as it has previously been assumed. Not only do *clientela* relations appear to have been far more complex, often short-lived ad hoc arrangements, but there were also simple issues of scale that would have prevented the direct control of all Romans by individual senatorial families (Brunt 1988; Mouritsen 2001).

Following the modification of the *clientela* theory, some scholars have argued that the masses represented a free and active agent in Roman public life. A few have even gone so far as to suggest that the people had a decisive influence on politics and state governance, thereby challenging the prevailing view of the Roman republic as an oligarchy (Millar 1998). The political role of the Roman people was, however, full of contradictions. On the one hand, the people made all major decisions affecting the state. On the other hand, they were also defined as profoundly passive participants in public life. This paradox led some ancient observers such as the Greek historian Polybius (ca. 200–ca.118 BCE) to construe the Roman constitution as the embodiment of the Greek ideal of the mixed constitution, which blended elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy into a single harmonious and stable system of “checks and balances” (Nippel 1980). His model has been highly influential but it was in essence a theoretical exercise that largely failed to grasp the uniquely Roman features of the constitution. We must distinguish in Rome between formal authority and powers that were to be actively exercised, and the “democratic” element was in essence a *formal* requirement that the *populus* ratify all laws and acclaim all magistrates.

A closer analysis of the functioning of the political institutions suggests that republican Rome was an oligarchy in all but name. The masses had a very limited input into policy making, since new legislation was not formulated in the assemblies, which merely gave it its formal approval. Laws could be rejected in the assembly but the evidence suggests this happened quite rarely—no certain case is (p. 399) known from the first century BCE. A rejection was probably considered something of an anomaly, since the rationale of the occasion appears to have been to ratify the proposal and not to exercise any specific judgment on its merit (cf. North 2002). A central regulatory factor in the legislative process therefore appears to have been the tribunician veto, and the public debates preceding the vote may typically have evolved around the question of whether a threatened veto should remain or be lifted; or, in other words, whether the proposal should go forward toward a formal ratification or not.

Public policy was formulated by the senate and magistrates, and while access to office relied on a popular mandate, the electoral crowds were generally small and unrepresentative. In practical terms it was impossible for more than a tiny proportion of the citizen body to take part in public meetings, and given the time-consuming nature of the proceedings it was probably mostly men of substance who could afford to devote their time to public affairs.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

The higher offices were filled through election in the centuriate assembly, where the voters were organized according to economic standing and the greater influence was given to the propertied classes. The choice of candidates was limited, since they all belonged to the elite. Moreover, there is little evidence for any overtly political content in the elections or the campaigns that preceded them. Usually legislative programs were not presented in advance nor were “party” affiliations declared. There are even indications that controversial issues may have been avoided by candidates during their electoral campaigns. The choice was therefore made on the basis of personal qualities (and family background) rather than any specific policies.

The people’s ability to exercise any direct influence on state policy appears to have been limited, which in turn makes the relative stability that characterized the Roman republic so much more remarkable. An explanation must be sought in a number of different areas, practical as well as ideological.

The formal construction of the Roman state would have made it difficult to formulate a “democratic” alternative to the existing order, since in theory the *populus* already played a pivotal role in the governance of the state. The often-mentioned “sovereignty” of the Roman people (the concept itself is of course a modern invention and belongs to the early modern period) was rooted in the primitive notion of the state as indistinct from the people, which therefore represented the only possible source of formal legitimacy. While in practice the people’s influence may have been highly circumscribed, the *populus* remained the focal point of all political proceedings and arguments.

This construction of the state was supported by a common ideology that celebrated the *libertas populi Romani*. Allegiance to the “freedom of the Roman people” was an all-pervasive political creed and central to the collective identity of the Roman republic. It lay at the heart of the Roman perception of the *res publica* as a community of free men, but importantly “free” did not in this context mean “democratic”; essentially it meant absence of *dominatio*, which in the most basic terms was defined as the freedom from the capricious rule of one man or a small (p. 400) clique. In this interpretation the “freedom” of the Roman people rested primarily on the maintenance of a collective government appointed through proper public procedure as well as on respect for the laws that protected their civic rights, including the right to a trial and to appeal against magisterial coercion, *provocatio*. In that sense it was equally attractive to aristocrats as to the masses, and no oligarchic alternative to the ideal of *libertas populi Romani* was therefore ever formulated nor was the “sovereignty” of the people formally challenged. What is striking about political discourse in the Roman republic is therefore what in a narrower context has been described as its ideological “monotony” (Morstein-Marx 2004).

The identity of the elite and the way it justified its leadership was fully compatible with the *libertas* ideology. Membership of the *nobilitas* was not formally based on birthright but on personal (or family) achievements. By defining itself as an “office-elite” the *nobilitas* could claim a direct popular mandate and justify its power in terms of personal merit and

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

services to the state. In practice only persons of considerable wealth may have been able to assume public responsibilities, but the fact that in principle it was open to all talented outsiders was hugely important.

The elite's meritocratic self-image influenced its style of government and it may also have encouraged it to pursue broadly consensual policies, which contributed to the maintenance of social and political stability. The elite's own lifestyle appears to have been relatively modest during most of the republic, which reduced the most glaring social inequality and encouraged an egalitarian vision of the citizen body. This was partly the result of internal self-policing, as reflected in a series of luxury laws curbing excessive lifestyles. Likewise the beneficent ideology of public munificence embraced by the elite may have contributed to a general sense of paternalistic responsibility, despite the evident opportunities for self-promotion that it also offered.

Most important in this context was the fact that the elite ethos of public service increasingly was channeled into a quest for military distinction. Extended military service was integrated into the public career structure, and the glory won on the battlefields became a major factor in the elite's internal competition. The result was that the nobility in effect became a "warrior elite," and the establishment of the new ruling class coincided with a major push in Rome's expansion in Italy. The *nobilitas* thus consolidated its position through its management of this process (Hölkeskamp 1993).

The military basis for the ascendancy of the *nobilitas* was reinforced through a wide range of public rituals and manifestations, such as the triumph, funeral processions, and orations that demonstrated not just their capability but also their devotion to the *res publica* and its ideals. Moreover, the cityscape of Rome was increasingly shaped by aristocratic self-promotion. Votive monuments and honorific statuary proliferated, which brought home visually Rome's external conquests and acted as reminders to the populace of the successful leadership provided by the nobility. The public rituals and their associated monuments thus became celebrations of the partnership between the Roman people, its leaders, and the tutelary gods, which manifested itself in the steady expansion of her power and territory.

(p. 401) As such they reflected the increasing militarization of Roman society during the republic. Prolonged periods of continuous military engagement and mass mobilization made warfare a normal, indeed habitual activity for the Romans, and most likely this development also had a profound effect on the relationship between leaders and masses. The line between civilian and military authority became blurred. On the one hand, the citizen body (or at least the politically active section of it) thus became largely identical with the army, which was used to take orders from their superiors, while, on the other hand, the military leaders became accustomed to an element of reciprocity in their dealings with the people and were imbued with a sense of obligation to lead by example. The Roman elite seems to have subscribed to the ideal of an approachable style of

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

leadership, characterized by what has been described as “joviality,” that is, the friendly demeanor assumed by a superior toward his social inferiors (Jehne 2000).

The continuous military engagements not only had a direct impact on domestic politics but also crucially created the practical opportunities that enabled the elite to pursue moderate, broadly consensual policies that accommodated the interests of the masses. There was, in other words, an intimate connection between internal social and political stability in Rome and her external expansion during the same period. We will therefore take a closer look at the initial stages of the Roman expansion.

Rome's Expansion in Italy

Rome first emerged as a local hegemonic power in Latium during the fourth century, when she came to dominate the other small city-states. According to later tradition the peoples of the plain had early formed a defensive league in reaction to raids by inland highland tribes. Given the geographical conditions in Latium, which offered little natural protection and could easily be overrun, this would have been an entirely logical measure and necessary for their collective security. Apparently the members of the league had also exchanged various mutual rights, enabling trade and intermarriage. In 340 the Latins revolted against Roman hegemony, and after their defeat in the ensuing Latin War the league was dissolved and Rome emerged as a dominant power in central Italy. Rome soon extended her hegemony to Campania and the Volscian tribes. This sparked a series of conflicts with the Samnites in central Italy, Rome's strongest opponent, as well as a host of other Italic peoples, including the Etruscans, Umbrians, Apulians, Lucanians, and the Gauls in northern Italy. By the early third century most of the peninsula had come under Roman control, and after 264 there was little armed opposition to her hegemony. However, during the Hannibalic War many Italian peoples in central and southern Italy joined Carthage, but with Roman victory secure they were brought back under Roman control.

(p. 402) A number of different factors contributed to the remarkable expansion of Roman power in Italy. Divisions within the ranks of Rome's opponents were exploited by clever alliance policies that played out different opponents against each other. But the major advantage enjoyed by Rome appears to have been her ability to mobilize large sections of the male population over long periods. The figures we have for the number of men under arms and the size of the citizen population—which must be used with great caution—suggest a very high level of mobilization. This was sustainable, practically, economically, and politically, for a number of reasons. At the most basic level mass mobilization was possible because of the structure of the citizen militia, which made the majority of male adults eligible for extended military service, only the *proletarii* and freedmen being de facto excluded. Rome also devised a system to ensure continuous military leadership during the extended campaigns, which broke with the principle of short-term tenure of

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

office. This happened through the invention of promagisterial posts during the middle republic, which extended the *imperium* of the annual officeholders and enabled them to continue in the field. It also allowed Rome to field several armies at the same time.

Warfare was originally a seasonal activity, and serving in military campaigns during parts of the year became part of the rhythm of life for the Roman peasantry. At a relatively early stage in the Roman expansion, however, soldiers had to remain under arms for longer periods, and it has been suggested that any negative impact of their absence on the economy and population was compensated for by early conscription and delayed male marriage (Rosenstein 2004). The level of mobilization in the Roman republic is nevertheless remarkable, not least in light of the limited evidence we have for any resistance to conscription. This may be explained partly by a habit of service that led to a gradual militarization of the Roman civic identity, partly by the collective as well as individual benefits that were to be derived from continuous warfare. The sharing of the proceeds of war, above all booty from plunder, would have provided an important incentive, but there were also wider social and economic implications. It created a rich supply of war captives who were sold into slavery; between 297 and 293 BCE no fewer than 69,000 were enslaved. This influx of labor would have reduced the need for debt-bondage, which was banned by the *lex Poetilia* in either 326 or 313 (Oakley 1993). Enslavement of Romans had never been allowed within Roman borders, but debt-bondage may have been relatively common. The foreign conquests also gave the Romans access to extensive land resources on which landless poor could be settled (cf. below). The creation of a steadily growing “cake” thus helped in maintaining social stability at home while also consolidating the position of the ruling *nobilitas*, which justified its leadership in terms of military prowess. It enabled Rome to export her population surplus and thereby ease domestic social pressures.

The Roman Hegemony in Italy

As the Romans extended their hegemony across the Italian peninsula, they developed complex patterns of relationships with individual Italian communities. (p. 403) Modern scholars have tried to identify behind these arrangements a deliberate strategy aimed at laying the foundation for the romanized Italy, which would emerge centuries later. There are obvious elements of teleology in this approach, and the result has often been the projection of much later developments back to an original “master plan.” In reality the Roman organization of Italy appears to have evolved gradually over a long period and to have been subject to continuous adjustments and modifications that took into account local circumstances and changing short-term objectives. We can nevertheless discern the vague outline of successive stages in the development of Rome’s hegemonic system, as well as some general principles that dictated her policies. The main hegemonic tools were incorporation, enfranchisement, treaties, land confiscation, and colonization. When dealing with individual communities, Rome would frequently combine these different components.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Rome's first major conquest took place in 396, when according to ancient tradition Veii, Rome's Etruscan neighbor to the north, was captured. The town was then destroyed, the population enslaved, and the territory annexed and distributed among Roman settlers. A different policy was pursued in 381, when the Latin town of Tusculum was incorporated and apparently given full Roman citizenship. This is the first recorded instance of the wholesale incorporation of another community into Rome. It broke with traditional notions of the city-state as comprised by the city and its surrounding territory, and thus opened up to a process of municipalization that allowed the dominant center to coexist with lesser urban communities that were allocated certain administrative responsibilities.

After the Latin War (340–338) a major reorganization of Rome's hegemony in Latium took place. The former allies were, with a few exceptions, all incorporated into the Roman state, apparently receiving full Roman citizenship. Later other communities in central Italy were treated similarly, although it is not clear whether full enfranchisement was always involved. The policy of extending both territory and citizen body was pursued up to a point in the third century when fears of overstressing Rome's ability to integrate foreign communities led to a change of policy. At that point Roman territory extended far beyond what could reasonably be defined as a city-state. The expansion of the Roman citizen body was feasible because of the particular Roman definition of their citizenship. Unlike in the Greek poleis, citizenship did not entail any direct political influence, and it could therefore be extended without jeopardizing political stability or causing any disruption to the internal balance of power. Moreover, citizenship was not regarded as a specific privilege as much as the common status held by all free members of society, which also explains the automatic enfranchisement of freed slaves, *liberti*, at Rome, a practice that surprised contemporary Greek observers who found it remarkably generous.

In contrast to most other ancient societies Rome could expand her citizen body without major adverse effects, enabling her to enjoy the benefits from increased manpower and the revenues that would pay for their deployment. Politically the expanded Roman state remained highly centralized with all power concentrated (p. 404) in the city of Rome. From that perspective it remained a "classic" city-state. The degree of political integration in the Roman territories may therefore have been limited. Political proceedings, festivals, and other civic events would mostly have affected those living in or near the city of Rome. The army may in fact have been the main integrative factor within the Roman state, since recruits from different parts of the Roman territory appear to have been deliberately mixed in individual army units (Jehne 2006).

The most common alternative to incorporation was the formation of alliances, which tied Italian communities externally to Rome while conceding full internal autonomy. Rome appears to have exchanged bilateral treaties with a large number of Italian states, although it has been argued that some defeated communities, rather than receiving a formal treaty, simply may have been left as *dediticii*, surrendered enemies, subject to Rome's will and command (Rich 2008). Some allies, especially those who had entered freely into an alliance with Rome without coercion, may have received more favorable terms than others, described as a *foedus aequum*, but it is not clear what the practical

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

implications were. The treaties deprived the allies of an independent foreign policy and tied them to Rome, whom they were obliged to support when called upon. The military contributions by the Italians were regulated by the *formula togatorum*, that is, the list of *togati*, presumably the men of military age, which the Roman authorities used to specify the numbers of troops required of each allied community. In the army the allied contingents would serve in separate units under their own officers, but under the high command of the Roman general. Beyond the military contributions the treaties did not impose any specific obligations. No tribute was ever imposed on the Italian allies. There was no attempt to extend direct rule or Roman law or to enforce further political or cultural integration. The internal autonomy of the allies also appears to have been broadly respected by Rome, apart from isolated instances when overbearing magistrates broke with convention.

The categories of allied and incorporated communities were not always clear-cut, and the edges of the Roman citizen body were particularly fuzzy. Later sources refer to a group known as *cives sine suffragio*, citizens without the vote, who may have presented a form of affiliated status by which the community received elements of Roman citizenship without being fully incorporated. The category remains elusive, and it may originally have covered a fairly wide range of different relations to Rome (Mouritsen 2007). Some were clearly treated more favorably than others, and in some cases their status may have been formalized in a treaty, which gave them an intermediate position halfway between ally and subject. It is not clear to what extent these communities served in the Roman legions or counted as allies.

The apparent inconsistencies in Rome's policy toward these peoples may reflect an early experimental phase before treaties became the single preferred means of regulating Rome's hegemony in Italy. The purpose of exchanging elements of the citizenship, including *ius conubium et commercium*, may have been to tie these communities more closely to Rome, politically and economically, through intermarriage and trade.

(p. 405) When an opponent had surrendered to Rome, punitive actions often followed in the form of land confiscations. According to one source, the Romans typically annexed a third of their opponent's territory. Depending on the size and location of the land a number of options were then open to the Roman authorities. The land could become Roman public land, *ager publicus populi Romani*, and handed over to so-called *possessores* who would cultivate the land without any formal legal entitlement. The land in question might also be settled by Romans citizens who would form small communities that had no formal political identity and for purposes of jurisdiction were served by officials dispatched from Rome. Finally the seized land might be turned into a Roman colony with full political autonomy.

Roman colonization in Italy had a long history, going back to the earliest expansion of the "Latin League," members of which would exploit new conquests through the establishment of joint settlements, *priscae coloniae Latinae*. After the Latin War Roman colonization entered a new phase with the foundation of a large colony at Cales in 334

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

BCE. It was for all intents and purposes a Roman settlement but it received “Latin” status, despite the dissolution of the Latin “league.” It became independent of Rome, with whom the new community shared a treaty, but it enjoyed the rights traditionally associated with members of the Latin League, namely the rights to intermarry and to conduct formal trade with Rome. The Roman settlers who were dispatched to the new colony were stripped of their citizenship and given a new political identity as citizens of Cales. In the following centuries Rome continued this policy until the 180s when almost thirty Latin colonies had been founded. At that point Rome’s colonial policy had already changed fundamentally with the foundation of the first large settlement of Roman citizens in northern Italy, which presumably was triggered by a wish to maintain direct control over the manpower resources.

The Latin colonies served multiple purposes. The new settlements relieved population pressures at Rome, and they asserted strategic control over newly conquered territories. The colonies ensured a permanent Roman presence in distant regions, thereby helping to maintain Roman hegemony. They were strategically located to maximize their geopolitical impact. In order to ensure contact with their mother city the colonies were linked to the Roman heartland through new roads. Alongside these large Latin colonies Rome also founded so-called *coloniae maritimae*, or coastal colonies, which were small fortified settlements set up to protect the coastline against attacks. Counting only 300 adult male settlers, these colonies were effectively garrisons without any local autonomy, and the colonists therefore maintained their Roman citizenship.

The final outcome of all these different policies and strategies was a highly complex political map of Italy, which reflected changing circumstances and short-term objectives during the period of conquest. Rome dealt with each opponent individually, employing a range of different forms of relationships and a graduated blend of rights and obligations, but the guiding principle was always to neutralize future threats and to ensure Roman access to their manpower resources, ideally without assuming long-term administrative or military responsibilities herself. In this way (p. 406) the organization of Italy was an ingenious means of supporting continuous expansion beyond the peninsula.

Having worked well for several centuries, the hegemonic system in Italy came to an end in 91, when the Italians revolted against Rome. The ensuing conflict became known as the “Social War” (from *socius* = ally), and after two years of intense fighting the Italians were defeated and their states incorporated into Rome. A later Roman tradition interpreted the war as an Italian fight for Roman citizenship and full inclusion into her state. However, given the loss of autonomy this would entail for the local Italian elites and the limited—and in most cases hypothetical—benefits that might be derived from Roman citizenship during the republic, it may be more realistic to see the conflict as a conventional uprising against foreign exploitation and hegemony.

In the long term the Roman hegemonic system may have proved too inflexible. Thus, it was incapable of accommodating the changing circumstances that followed from the creation of Rome’s overseas empire. This expansion had to a great extent been achieved

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

through allied manpower, which seems to have made up between half and two-thirds of the army. The result was a conflict of interest as to the control and exploitation of this jointly created but unilaterally controlled asset. The alliance system was entirely bilateral with no federal bodies, which might have played a mediating role and prevented the clash of interests from erupting into the violence of the Social War (Mouritsen 1998; 2006). At the same time the Roman colonists in the “Latin” settlements also seem to have campaigned for readmission to the Roman franchise, adding a further destabilizing element to the complex political situation that emerged in the later second century.

The outcome of the war was an Italian defeat, marking the dissolution of their polities and the wholesale incorporation of their populations into Rome. The result was a new territorial state, more than twice as large as before, with an ethnically diverse population. For the first time the entire peninsula formed a single political unit with a single citizenship. Still, only limited attempts seem to have been made to enforce any cultural unity in the new state. The gradual acculturation of its many different constituents that took place during the first century BCE is therefore perhaps best understood as an inadvertent by-product of the disruptions caused by the civil wars and of the extensive colonial schemes, which resulted in an unprecedented level of population displacement (Scheidel 2004).

Imperial Expansion Outside Italy

Rome made her first conquest outside the Italian peninsula after the first war against Carthage in 241, when most of Sicily fell under Roman control. At that point it was decided not to extend the Italian system of autonomous or half-incorporated allies to Sicily. Instead it would be ruled directly by a Roman magistrate, who was (p. 407) invested with unlimited authority within his sphere of command—or *provincia*, as it was called, hence the later use of the term “province” to denote a subject territory. It later became common practice for higher magistrates with *imperium* after their year in office to take up a post with *propraetorian* or *proconsular* powers, governing a province for a limited period of time.

In line with this policy the new territory was exploited economically in the form of tribute to be paid in either money or grain. The existing system for the extraction of resources was left in place, and the imposition of Roman rule therefore represented continuation on a local level rather than disruption. The tributary system would subsequently be extended to other overseas territories that came under Roman control, although often after some initial reluctance to assume direct administrative responsibility. The advantages of this arrangement were obvious, since it reduced the need for a permanent Roman administration. The existing social structures were as a rule also left intact as far as possible. By bringing the native elites on their side, the Romans promoted local compliance and reduced the need for extensive garrisoning of the territory.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

Rome did not impose a uniform system of taxation and tax collection throughout the provinces. A standard tax would be levied, known as the *stipendium*, which covered both capitation taxes and taxes on landed property. Individual governors could also impose special levies, *tributum*. In 123 the tax collection in Asia was handed over to private companies of *publicani*, who would become powerful political players in Rome. Later this system was extended to some of the other provinces and these companies might also be put in charge of mining, road building, and the collection of tolls and various duties.

The establishment of the overseas empire had a direct and immediate impact on the Roman state, which experienced an enormous increase in revenues. The *tributum* was not levied from 167, since it was no longer needed to finance the army. It also led to an increase in trade, a sector in which the ruling class was not allowed to engage directly. Thus, the *lex Claudia* (218 BCE) banned senators and their sons from owning large seagoing ships. The huge influx of slaves also helped to transform the Italian economy.

The nature of Roman imperialism falls outside the scope of this survey, but we may briefly note the importance of elite competition focused on the attainment of military glory, combined with a pervasive militarization of Roman society and the manifest economic benefits to be accrued from continuous warfare (North 1981; Harris 1984; Rich 1993). Not all wars may have been directly initiated by Rome, but every opportunity for further conquests seems to have been embraced without hesitation. The structure of the Roman hegemony in Italy may also have contributed to her willingness to engage in overseas conflicts, since it only came into effect when soldiers were called upon to support Rome in such engagements.

The overseas conquests changed the nature and scale of Roman politics, which in turn had direct consequences for the ruling class's ability to control its own membership. New sources of elite conflict emerged as the imperial riches and career opportunities raised the stakes in their internal competition. The establishment (p. 408) of the empire thus put increasing pressure on the republican system of government, straining the cohesion and consensual ideology of the ruling class beyond the breaking point.

The Fall of the Roman Republic

The Roman republic came to an end in the later part of the first century BCE, when increased political instability accompanied by a rise in political violence and other "unconstitutional" practices eventually led to civil wars and final collapse. The gradual disintegration of the republic was the product of complex historical processes involving a range of interlocking factors that all contributed to the crisis. A root cause was the decline in elite cohesion, which highlighted intrinsic weaknesses in the political system and in turn was exacerbated by structural flaws in the organization of the empire. In

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

addition, changes to the citizen militia and the dramatic expansion of the Roman citizen body after the Social War created a fertile ground for the politicization of the army.

The beginning of the end of the republic is traditionally dated to 133 BCE when political violence erupted for the first time since the end of the struggle of the orders. The reforming tribune Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus was killed by senatorial opponents after he had used his powers in a way that broke with convention. In doing so he ignored the consensual ideology of the elite, which required that officeholders submit to the collective view of the ruling class. The situation in 133 thus encapsulated a deeper structural problem immanent in the Roman constitution. The ten tribunes held immense powers—active as well as reactive—but the need for unanimity among them had traditionally ensured stability. This principle was abandoned by Gracchus, which left his senatorial opponents with no option but to eliminate him by force. Their actions exposed the disparity between the senate's formal advisory role and its *de facto* position as the seat of the aristocratic government. When confronted by intransigent officeholders who refused to submit to its authority the senate had virtually no constitutional means of enforcing the majority view.

Though logical within the context, the recourse to violence in 133 set an important precedent, since it undermined the traditional political imperative according to which all conflicts of interest had to find a negotiated solution. Once the taboo against force was broken, it became more difficult to enforce a compromise through arguments or appeals to the aristocratic consensus. Rival factions and individuals could choose to fight it out, first in the streets and later on the battlefields.

While the crisis of 133 marked a new turn in the articulation of Roman politics, it was not a bolt from the blue. The stability of the middle republic should not be overestimated. Open confrontations may have been avoided but the republic had often been on the brink of crisis. However, tensions and conflicts were generally (p. 409) resolved through negotiations and the application of peer pressure, underlining the fundamental truth that Rome could be governed only if public authority was exercised consensually. When this consensus broke down the political system offered ample opportunities for individual politicians to assert themselves against the collective. They could appeal directly to the assemblies and have their proposals ratified without senatorial backing, since the *populus* remained the sole source of formal authority. This in turn changed the role of the popular institutions, which were given an entirely new political function as decision-making bodies. They became focal points of the activities of rival groups and individuals seeking popular legitimacy for their actions. In other words, with the breakdown of elite consensus the ritualized nature of political proceedings at Rome became a liability for the republican system as a whole.

In this political climate the absence of a permanent armed force in the city of Rome also became critical. It meant that the central authorities had no means of maintaining public order, and the result was an increase in street violence and civil unrest. The

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

demilitarization of the city of Rome, which had previously sustained the system of aristocratic, shared government, now emerged as a serious threat to this form of government.

The failings of the political process in Rome fed into a structural problem inherent in the organization of the empire. Under the republic the provincial system had delegated immense powers and vast military resources to individual members of the ruling class, who were beyond any effective control from the center during their tenure. This was in itself a major flaw in the system, but combined with the constitutional weaknesses noted above it became fatal for the republic. Officeholders could use the assemblies to procure provincial commands for themselves or their allies, which broke with the traditional format of limited, short-term service. A formal mandate could now be gained for provincial postings that exceeded the conventional limits in terms of both scale and duration. This in turn enabled generals to establish an alternative power base away from the center, which they were able to challenge from a previously unimaginable position of strength.

The lack of central control was exacerbated by another important development, relating to the recruitment of soldiers. The minimum property threshold for conscription had already been lowered during the second century (Rathbone 1993), and difficulties of recruitment during the second century had forced generals to disregard conventions and draft *proletarii* to the army. In 107 the general Gaius Marius formally abandoned the link between property and military service. This development undermined the traditional militia structure of the Roman army, which had been predicated on the soldiers' ability to sustain themselves economically when their military service was over. The repercussions were immediate, since Marius as the first general sought to provide land for his veterans through colonial settlements. The senate opposed the scheme with the result that veteran provision became the responsibility of individual generals rather than the state. This was a crucial mistake, for it generated a shift in army loyalty away from the state onto their generals, whom soldiers became willing to follow against the center (p. 410) (Brunt 1988). The problem of loyalty may already have been exacerbated by the heterogeneous character of the new state that had emerged out of the Social War. Thus, a large proportion of the soldiers who fought in the civil wars were newly incorporated Italians whose allegiance to the Roman state is likely to have been much weaker.

Three major factors contributed to the collapse of the republic: the division of formal and informal powers in the Roman constitution, the structure of military commands and provincial administration, and the composition of the Roman army. But the underlying cause that enabled these factors to come together with such dramatic effect was ultimately the decline in the unity of the ruling class, which had gradually crumbled under the impact of the new imperial reality. Therefore, put very simply, it could be argued that while the first stages of Rome's expansion entrenched the position of the ruling class, the later conquests outside of Italy led to increased friction within the elite and ultimately to its loss of internal cohesion and group discipline. The eventual outcome

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

was a collapse of collective government and the rise of autocracy (Gruen 1974; Meier 1980).

References

- Badian, E. 1990a. "The consuls, 179–49 BC." *Chiron* 20: 371–413.
- . 1990b. "Kommentar: Magistratur und Gesellschaft." In W. Eder, ed., *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik*, 458–475. Stuttgart.
- Beard, M., J. A. North, and S. Price. 1998. *Religions of Rome*. Cambridge.
- Brennan, T. C. 2000. *The praetorship in the Roman Republic*. 2 vols. Oxford.
- Brunt, P. A. 1982. "Nobilitas and novitas." *Journal of Roman Studies* 72: 1–17.
- . 1988. *The fall of the Roman Republic and related essays*. Oxford.
- Cornell, T. J. 1995. *The beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000–264 BC)*. London.
- Finer, S. E. 1997. *The history of government from the earliest times*. Vol. 2, *The intermediate ages*. Oxford.
- Gruen, E. S. 1974. *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*. Berkeley.
- Harris, W. V. 1984. *War and imperialism in Republican Rome*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Hölkeskamp, K.-J. 1987. *Die Entstehung der Nobilität*. Stuttgart.
- . 1993. Conquest, competition and consensus: Roman expansion in Italy and the rise of the *nobilitas*. *Historia* 42: 12–39.
- . 1995. Oratoris maxima scaena: Reden vor dem Volk in der politischen Kultur der Republik. In M. Jehne, ed., *Demokratie in Rom? Die Rolle des Volkes in der Politik der römischen Republik*. Stuttgart, 11–49.
- Hopkins, K., and G. Burton. 1983. "Political succession in the late republic (249–50 BC)." In K. Hopkins, *Death and renewal: Sociological studies in Roman history*, 2, 31–119. Cambridge.
- Jehne, M. ed. 1995. *Demokratie in Rom? Die Rolle des Volkes in der Politik der römischen Republik*. Stuttgart. (p. 411)
- . 2000. Jovialität und Freiheit: Zur Institutionalität der Beziehungen zwischen Ober- und Unterschichten in der römischen Republik. In B. Linke, and M. Stemmler, eds. *Mos*

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

maiorum: Untersuchungen zu den Formen der Identitätsstiftung und Stabilisierung in der römischen Republik, 207–235. Stuttgart.

———. 2006. Römer, Latiner und Bundesgenossen im Krieg: Zu Formen und Ausmaß der Integration in der republikanischen Armee. In M. Jehne, and R. Pfeilschifter, eds., *Herrschaft ohne Integration? Rom und Italien in republikanischer Zeit*, 243–267. Frankfurt.

Lintott, A. 1999. *The constitution of the Roman republic*. Oxford.

Meier, C. 1980. *Res publica amissa*. 2nd ed. Frankfurt.

Millar, F. 1998. *The crowd in Rome in the late Republic*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Morstein-Marx, R. 2004. *Mass oratory and political power in the late Roman Republic*. Cambridge.

Mouritsen, H. 1998. *Italian unification: A study in ancient and modern historiography*. London.

———. 2001. *Plebs and politics in the late Roman Republic*. Cambridge.

———. 2006. "Hindsight and historiography." In M. Jehne and R. Pfeilschifter, eds., *Herrschaft ohne Integration? Rom und Italien in republikanischer Zeit*, 23–37. Frankfurt.

———. 2007. "Civitas sine suffragio: Ancient concepts and modern ideology." *Historia* 56: 141–158.

Nicolet, C. 1980. *The world of the citizen in Republican Rome*. London.

Nippel, W. 1980. *Mischverfassungstheorie und Verfassungsrealität in antike und früher Neuzeit*. Stuttgart.

North, J. A. 1981. "The development of Roman imperialism." *Journal of Roman Studies* 71: 1–9.

———. 2002. "Introduction: Pursuing democracy." In A. K. Bowman et al., eds., *Representations of empire: Rome and the Mediterranean world*, 1–12. Oxford.

Oakley, S. 1993. "The Roman conquest of Italy." In J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and society in the Roman world*, 9–37. London.

Rathbone, D. W. 1993. "The census qualifications of the *assidui* and the *prima classis*." In H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg et al., eds., *De agricultura: In memoriam Pieter Willem de Neeve*, 121–152. Amsterdam.

Rich, J. W. 1993. "Fear, greed and glory: The causes of Roman war-making in the middle republic." In J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and society in the Roman world*, 38–68. London.

The Roman Empire I: The Republic

———. 2008. "Treaties, allies and the Roman conquest of Italy." In P. De Souza, ed., *War and peace in ancient and medieval history*, 51–75. Cambridge.

Rosenstein, N. 2004. *Rome at war: Farms, families, and death in the Middle Republic*. Chapel Hill, NC.

Rüpke, J. 1990. *Domi militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom*. Stuttgart.

Scheid, J. 2003. *An introduction to Roman religion*. Edinburgh.

Scheidel, W. 2004. "Human mobility in Roman Italy, I: The free population." *Journal of Roman Studies* 94: 1–26.

Henrik Mouritsen

Henrik Mouritsen, Professor of Roman History, King's College London.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Peter Fibiger Bang

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Ancient Roman History, Greek and Roman Law, Social and Economic
History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0016

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the transformation of the Roman Empire from a republican to a monarchy system of government, explaining that the republican system was replaced because its political institutions were too small to manage the growing social power brought about by military expansionism. It discusses how the first emperor Augustus consolidated his monarchy by creating an institutional infrastructure that sought to regularize the retirement of the soldiery, and also considers the source of stability of the monarchy and the emergence of empire-wide aristocracy.

Keywords: Roman Empire, monarchy, political institutions, military expansionism, social power, Augustus, institutional infrastructure, soldiery, aristocracy

Four times I helped the public treasury so that I provided 150 million sesterces to those who were in charge of the public treasury and when Marcus Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius were consuls I paid out of my own patrimony 170 million sesterces into the military treasury which had been founded on my advice and from which bonuses were paid to those who had served for twenty or more years.

Augustus, *Res Gestae* 17

Prosaic and dry, these sentences may nevertheless be said to encapsulate the secret, perhaps even the wonder, of the Roman imperial monarchy: a stable institutional arrangement had been created to finance the cost of the army and the discharge of soldiers. This claim appears in the summary of his life's achievements, which Augustus, the first emperor (r. 27 BCE–14 CE), drafted and gave instructions posthumously to publicize on bronze plaques in front of his mausoleum on the Campus Martius in Rome (Witschel 2008). Nevertheless, a paragraph toward the end of the document has received far more attention during the last century of scholarship. In what would be chapter 34 of modern editions of this text, Augustus notoriously, and disingenuously, claimed to have restored the Roman republic to the control of the people and senate after his decisive and final victory at the battle of Actium in (p. 413) the civil wars of the 40s and 30s BCE. From then on, it was alleged, Augustus had participated in republican political life according to the constitutional precedents, not arrogating to himself greater powers than his colleagues in holding office but only “surpassing everyone else in personal authority” (cf. the emphasis on politics and culture in Galinsky 2005).

The image of Augustus ruling the Roman empire in godfather-like fashion on the basis of his personal authority is alluring; it has taught historians to throw into sharper relief the ties of patronage and clientage, which in life around the Roman court organized relations between monarch and aristocracy (von Premerstein 1937; Saller 1982). But it is also misleading; it leaves a false impression of a monarchy underwritten by feeble institutional supports and forced to rely on the individual authority and charisma of the ruler (Lo Cascio 2000, 8; Flaig 2011, 76–78). The claim to have restored the republic was, as the historian and senator Tacitus pointed out with his unerring perception of the operation of power, a facade, a pretense (*Annals* 1.9–10; Syme 1958). This was the concession that Augustus made to the lingering republican sentiments that once had conspired to assassinate Julius Caesar, his adoptive father. Suspected of harboring monarchical ambitions, the latter had famously fallen victim to the attempt on his life masterminded by Brutus and Cassius in the name of liberty. Having no intentions of suffering a similar fate, Augustus chose to uphold many of the republican institutions and instead tried to harness them to serve his new monarchy (Eder 1990). In this he was only partially successful. Preserving the old republican magistracies made it possible to satisfy the ambitions and hunger for office of the aristocracy. But, even if few were fooled by this disposition, the attempt to dress up the new monarchy in republican garb still complicated and often strained to the breaking point relations between ruler and nobility (Hopkins and Burton 1983b, 170; Flaig 1992; Winterling 2003). The gory spectacle of

early imperial history, so vividly present in the public imagination, bears testimony to the tortured career of the first century of the Augustan monarchy.

The secret of the stability of the monarchy should be sought elsewhere than in the informal arrangements of the so-called principate, and the opening quotation in this chapter points the way. The personal dimension of rule is no less articulated, but its basis is revealed to be patrimonial. State finances and the household of the emperor had become inextricably linked (Veyne 1976, 534–568; Lo Cascio 2000, 97–176; Speidel 2009, 53–85). Moreover, and from a state formation perspective this is the crucial development, the first emperor drew on the resources that he controlled to put the financing of the military on a stable footing. The army was by a wide margin the biggest branch and institution of the Roman state. During the age of republican conquests, the Roman army had gradually evolved from a citizen militia into a corps of professional soldiers. Perennial warfare, increasingly distant theaters of engagement, and a growing strain on manpower resources combined to make impossible the army's old reliance on self-supporting citizen soldiers drawn from the yeoman peasantry of Italy. To fill the ranks of the legions, growing numbers of recruits had to be admitted without independent means, that is, landless (p. 414) members of the country population. On discharge these came to depend on the state, and in particular their general, to secure for them a small plot of land for sustenance. This development turned the army of the last century of the republic into an increasingly potent weapon in the political struggles and rivalries of competing factions of the Roman aristocracy (Brunt 1962; Gabba 1976; Erdkamp 2006). The political institutions of the republic were too small, as demonstrated by Mouritsen in the previous chapter, to manage and absorb this newly mobilized source of social power into the regular channels of political life. Instead followed a succession of civil wars, dictators, and military men as the republic declined into a state of unstable “praetorian” politics—to use the term coined by Huntington in his classic study (1968) of military coups and political instability in modernizing third world countries similarly experiencing a period of rapid transition.

In the process of consolidating his monarchy, Augustus set about terminating this social conflict by creating an institutional infrastructure that sought to regularize the retirement of the soldiery (Alston 2007, 177–189). The reform combined several elements. To finance discharge payments, a permanent fund was established that would receive the proceeds from the introduction of two new taxes. The land allotments to the veterans had caused considerable tension and discontent during the final decades of the republic. It was impossible to find sufficient unoccupied arable land in Italy. Confiscation and forced purchases on an extensive scale had been inevitable. During his reign Augustus gradually discontinued this much-hated practice. If given land on retirement, the legionaries would now receive it in newly founded colonies in the provinces. There the veteran communities might even help to consolidate Roman rule as props of the imperial order. But in the long term, it was more important that increasingly the soldiers began to receive a cash bonus instead of a plot of land. Finally, the burden on state finances was made more manageable

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

by further extending the time of service required before retirement. Army strength was kept up by fewer people serving longer and numbers needing discharge payment were cut back.

The most powerful institution of the Mediterranean world, the Roman army, had in large measure been tamed and the interests of the soldiery tied into the continuation of the imperial monarchy. For long periods, rivalry and conflict at the court were contained without erupting into full-blown civil war. During its first century, the monarchy survived both the withdrawal from Rome of an aging and alienated Tiberius, the assassination of Caius Caligula, the death possibly by poison of Claudius, and the desperate suicide of Nero. The secret of stable imperial monarchy was lodged in the institutional stability of one of the largest standing professional armies of recorded preindustrial history. This was the extraordinary achievement of the Roman emperors and one that invited emulation when European state-builders during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were faced with the need again to mobilize vast infantry armies. From study of the ancients, humanist scholars such as Lipsius would teach generals the importance of drill and exercise to enable complex maneuvers on the battlefield (1598, 355–366 with concluding comparison; Parker 1988, 19–20). But, apart from the obvious difference in (p. 415) gunpowder technology, early-modern and Roman war craft differed in one important respect. The latter was consolidated by the imposition of a Mediterranean-wide empire, with few real rivals left to challenge the might of Rome (see Map 15.1); the former was relentlessly driven on in an arms race fueled by intensifying competition of ever more compact regional monarchies in a state system where every attempt to establish hegemony failed (Tilly 1992; van Creveld 1999). Then, whereas post-Napoleonic Europe brought the Darwinian military struggle of states to its logical conclusion in the mass mobilization of national armies, the Roman imperial army was increasingly recruited from the empire at large, rather than, as historically, from Italy. The exploitation of extensive and hegemonic empire would chart an alternative to the path of internal buildup dictated by the unabating pressures of foreign competition. Consolidation rather than continuous intensification is what characterizes Roman state formation under the rule of the Caesars. From the late first century BCE till the beginning of the fifth century CE, the history of the imperial monarchy may be mapped between a set of coordinates marked out by a number of civil wars leading to dynastic shifts and one prolonged period of internal division, rather than by external conflict.

The period from Augustus till the murder of Alexander Severus in a legionary camp on the Germanic frontier in 235 CE is conventionally referred to as the principate. Then follow fifty years of continuous internal warfare, exacerbated in the darkest hours by foreign invasions from the east and the north, before centralized imperial power is again consolidated under Diocletian in 284 CE. But reconstituted unity was hard won and tenuous. Diocletian gradually came to appreciate that he had to appoint colleagues to rule parts of the empire for him. During the long period of internal division, the city of Rome had finally ceased to be the center of political power while emperors began to set up court in regional capitals. Power had irreversibly gravitated toward the provinces and the armies stationed there. In the course of the fourth century CE, the tendency to a

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

regionalization of imperial power, with several co-emperors, alternated with brief interludes where particularly successful emperors managed to unite government under their authority. The “Dominate” is the label traditionally pinned to the monarchy for this period and reflects the fact that historians have thought to see the arrival of a more absolutist style of rule than was the practice under the principate.



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 15.1. The Roman Empire around 70 CE. After map in M. T. Boatwright, D. J. Gargola, N. Lenski, R. J. A. Talbert, *The Romans: From village to empire. A history of Rome from earliest times to the end of the western empire*, 2nd ed. OUP 2012.

Yet, the sidelining of Rome the city and the tendency toward a regionalization of government bespeak a more complex development than is implied by the notion of an increasingly absolutist, distant, and centralized form of rule. After all, few emperors of the late antique world held command of the whole empire; this was a feature of the principate. But by

the turn of the first century, particularly successful provincial families were beginning to contribute emperors. Spain, North Africa, and Syria all saw members of their noble elites elevated to the imperial purple. This rise of the provinces continued with undiminished vigor in the third and fourth centuries. It was Machiavelli, the student of Renaissance power and politics through Roman eyes, who probably first made the observation that the military force, which enabled conquest, was insufficient as a tool of government. (p. 416)

(p. 417) Provincial societies had to be ruled by other means (*Il Principe*, chap. 3). Local landowning elites had to be co-opted to administer the Roman peace and collect the imperial taxes. However, if these groups could do most of the work of government on the ground, then they might also be able to take over the empire. Even more than the minimalist republic, the monarchy had been successful in aligning such elites around the realm to the cause of empire. It was not only the rank and file of the army that was increasingly recruited outside Italy; the same gradually came to be true of the imperial aristocracy. This development culminated in the fifth and sixth centuries CE when, after the division of the realm between the two underage heirs of Theodosius (d. 395 CE), the western part gradually flaked apart during the next half-century while imperial rule in the Greek east remained stable and was even strengthened. It was the Greek Roman empire that accomplished the codification of Latin Roman law; and it was from here that the emperor Justinian (r. 527–65 CE) was able to launch an attempt to recoup some of the lost territories in the western Mediterranean (Maas 2005).

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

The history of state formation under the imperial monarchy, then, may be seen as a process whereby the explosive mobilization of social forces of the Roman republic was tamed and consolidated into a more widely based, more extensive form of imperial government. It is this process that will be analyzed in more detail below. Its course will be tracked by charting the development of its three main components: the military organization of Mediterranean hegemony, the emergence of a court around the imperial household, and the co-optation of provincial elites into the government of the empire. A fourth and final section then explores how the rising importance of provincial elites affected the renewed efforts at state formation from the third century CE onward as the equilibrium achieved under the principate became unstable and gave way to the late antique world.

The Military Organization of Mediterranean Hegemony

The victory at Actium in 31 BCE and the suicide of his defeated opponent, Antony, together with Cleopatra, allowed Caesar's heir Octavianus to complete his metamorphosis from revolutionary leader to Augustus, the solemn and paternal world ruler. He was left with a pressing problem on his hands. He was now in command of a military force of staggering size, the armies recruited by both sides to wage the civil war. In total, the number lay between fifty and sixty legions of Roman citizens and an unknowable quantity of auxiliary forces. The level of military mobilization had been extreme and unrivaled; it was also unsustainable and unnecessary. Italian manpower resources had been stretched to the breaking point to fill the many legions required by the Roman civil war effort. Not all of the recently created (p. 418) regiments had been manned exclusively by citizens; it had not been uncommon to fill the ranks with provincial subjects (Brunt 1971; Hopkins 1978; Keppie 1983, 140).

In a long-term perspective, it is remarkable that the level of military capacity that the republic had had to build up to defeat Carthage in the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) was more than enough to translate into a pan-Mediterranean hegemony during the second century BCE. No other foreign power could pressure Rome to a similar last-ditch effort again. Maintaining armies at half or two-thirds the size of the peak levels reached during the confrontation with Hannibal, the republic went on from triumph to triumph, acquiring a steadily expanding empire with one hand tied behind the back, so to speak. The acquisition of provincial territories did undoubtedly produce a slow underlying trend for the number of troops to accumulate. New provinces required garrisoning. However, the next phase of significant expansion in state capacity was inextricably bound up with internal conflicts over the control of the empire. It was in the 80s–70s BCE and then again in the 40s–30s BCE that dramatic increases in army size occurred, and in the latter period more than the former. The 80s–70s BCE were the decades of the Social War, the imposition of Sulla's dictatorship, the Spartacus uprising, Sertorius's renegade government in Spain, and the wars against Mithridates, the king of Pontus. Most of the recorded expansion, however, was cosmetic. The troops of the former Italian allies, which had always constituted about a good half of the armies fielded by the republic, had now become citizen soldiers. A real and substantial upward leap, on the other hand, was achieved during the confrontations of the generalissimos that tore the state apart in the civil wars of the last two decades of the republic. Exact figures are unobtainable, but a plausible estimate envisages a doubling of the number of citizens enrolled in the legions, from some 120,000 in the late 50s BCE to 240,000 by the end of the civil war (Hopkins 1978, 33). Internal struggles over control of the empire had become a more significant spur to the process of state formation than imperial conquest and expansion (see Table 15.1).

The Roman Empire IIThe Monarchy

With no credible rival left and many legionaries looking to retirement, Augustus had little incentive to maintain the army at its late republican peak level. It was far too large for his purposes, too costly to retain anyhow, and therefore needed to be disbanded (Keppie 1983, chaps. 5–7; Jacques and Scheid 1990, chap. 4; Le Bohec 1994; Rankow 2007). Of foreign powers Parthia was the only substantial rival of Rome. But the “Iranian” threat could be contained with far fewer troops, and the emperor had no appetite for risking his newly won authority on a Parthian adventure. Quite the reverse, redress for the devastating defeat suffered by Crassus at Carrhae in 53 BCE was sought through a negotiated peace rather than avenged by a bloody campaign. The deal was sealed by the return of the legionary standards that had been so ignominiously lost (Cassius Dio 53.33; Campbell 1993: 221–23). Augustus advertised this as a great triumph and conspicuously dedicated the regained legionary eagles in the temple of Mars in his new splendid forum in the capital (Zanker 1987: 188–217; Henderson and Beard 2001: 165–75; Schneider 2012:82–83). Rome had now reached a position of a stable, unrivaled, if not quite unchallenged, territorial hegemony in the greater Mediterranean world; the empire (p. 419) had acquired a near monopoly in the market for violence and protection, to borrow the terms of Frederick Lane.

Table 15.1 Roman and Early-Modern Military Mobilization

	No. of legions	Realistic strength	Notional strength
218–201BCE 2nd Punic War	20–25	50,000–80,000 (Brunt’s estimate)	110,000–137,500
200–91 BCE	5–10	22,000–44,000 (80%)	27,500–55,000
90–62BCE	20–35	88,000–154,000 (80%)	110,000–192,500
61–59 BCE	15	66,000 (80%)	82,500
44BCE	34–36	149,600–158,400 (80%)	187,000–198,000
43–31 BCE	51–66	224,400–290,400 (80%)	280,500–363,000
31 BCE–161 CE	25–28	110,000–123,200 (80%)	137,500–154,000

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Marcus Aurelius	30	132,000 (80%)	165,000
Septimius Severus	33	145,200 (80%)	181,500

Note: The figures given above inevitably simplify a more complex reality and dispel with many details whose inclusion would have made the table more exact, but also less clear (Brunt 1971, 404, 418, 424, 432–33, 449, 480–512; Hopkins 1978, 33; Rankov 2007, 71–72). For instance, the 5–10 legions given for the second century BCE indicates the normal range, while a few exceptional years saw a few more legions put into service. For all periods, I have used a figure of 5,500 as a baseline for calculating the notional strength of the legion, thus ignoring historical variation. In practice, legions would often have been staffed at less. Scheidel (1996, 132–137) has argued for a plausible range of 5,000 to 4,600. Brunt (1971, appendix 27) found legions of the late republican period to be closer to 4,000. Perhaps this was due to the urgency and haste with which the legions of the civil wars had to be raised. On the other hand, the contenders had every incentive to cram as many men into their armies as possible and so Brunt’s estimate may be closer to the norm than sometimes thought. Preindustrial armies seem generally to have fallen short of the theoretically possible. I see no reason why Rome, existing under similar organizational and technological constraints, should have marked an exception to this rule, so 80% of notional strength has been adopted to estimate the plausible number of legionaries. Finally, as our most certain time-series information on the Roman army relates to the number of legions, no attempt has been made to include auxiliaries whose numbers normally matched or even exceeded those of the legionaries. At any rate, all that is possible is rough estimates of the size of the Roman army. Adding more details, or more careful attempts to estimate size at specific points in time, would not alter the conclusions, but only produce an illusion of unwarranted historical exactitude. The main result, though, is clear: After the Second Punic War it is especially the civil war periods of the first century that drive up numbers.

When we emphasize the military dimension of its activities, a state may be conceptualized as a violence-producing enterprise or, to put it differently, and perhaps more accurately, a seller of protection (Lane 1958; Steensgaard 1981; also above, chapter 1). In return for the payment of taxes, it offers protection against the predations of other military establishments—and itself. Few state-forms fit this template better than an empire built on conquest (cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 4.74). Military victory and dominance was used to demand taxes from defeated communities and prevent rivals from doing the same. But with few of these left, the Roman Empire of Augustus had come to enjoy a relative monopoly. Imperial government could (p. 420) take advantage of this situation in two ways. It might cut costs, reduce the size of its military, and thus cash in a peace dividend or, more precisely, pocket a monopoly profit and claim a tribute (cf. Hopkins 2009: 196). Alternatively, it might maintain an oversized army. In a sense, it is the army that is the

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

monopolist and so there is little to prevent it from feathering its own nest. Military juntas have regularly exploited their monopoly to swell the ranks of the army, looking to the interests of the military institution more than those of other groups (Lane 1958, 406; cf. Eich 2009 on the Roman imperial monarchy). These two alternatives, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but may usefully be seen as opposite ends of a spectrum. The Augustan principate arguably combined elements of both strategies. Yet, where to locate it on the spectrum is difficult to determine with exactness. The lack of precise information on manpower numbers is a major obstacle.

Table 15.1.2 (early-modern military mobilization)

Year	Spain	France	Ottoman Empire
1470	20,000	40,000	103,500
1550	150,000	50,000	118,000
1600	200,000	80,000	140,000
1700	50,000	400,000	140,000

Note: Needless to say, this table too, based on Tilly (1992, 79), Kennedy (1988, 71), Inalcik (1994, 88-89), and Murphey (1999, 41, 45, 49) is a gross simplification of a complex historical development and ignores important differences in types of recruitment and forms of military tenure. The figures, though less uncertain than the Roman, are rounded, broad, in part impressionistic, estimates or constructs. They reveal the steadily expanding scale of early-modern European warfare. Between them, the three powers included in the table controlled most of the former Roman world. In terms of mobilization for warfare, the seventeenth century appears as a watershed where the early-modern experience begins to outstrip the Roman. For individual campaigns no power ever mobilized its entire potential army strength.

Eventually Augustus settled for twenty-eight legions (+ a guard in Rome). When three of these were eradicated by a coalition of Germanic tribes in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE, no attempt was made to replace them. For most of the principate the number of legions lay in this range, rising slightly toward the end of the period. These are our only certain coordinates. A legion, at full strength, seems to have held between 5,000 and 6,000 men. Proceeding from a mean of 5,500, the legions could have comprised some 140,000 to 165,000 citizen soldiers at full strength. Most of the time, however, the figure is likely to have been less or even substantially less (Brunt 1971, appendix 27; Scheidel 1996, 121). Most states in preindustrial history have demobilized much of their armies in peacetime. The Roman republic had been no different. The monarchy changed this somewhat by transforming the republican military into a standing army. Even so, the army was by far the biggest expense on the imperial budget (Cassius Dio 52.28 with Mattern 1999, 129)

and the temptation, not to say the need, to save in peacetime must have been irresistible. Indirect confirmation of this practice comes from reports that active campaigning (p. 421) significantly increased the costs of the military, no doubt, albeit not solely, because more troops were recruited to fill up the ranks (pace Birley 1981, 39; cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 13.7; Cassius Dio 56.16.4; Isaac 1986; Mattern 1999, 142–143).

This consideration applies even more to the auxiliary troops of the imperial armies. Tacitus comments that under Tiberius their size corresponded more or less to that of the legions (*Annals* 4.5). This should be taken as no more than an indication of very rough orders of magnitude. Neither Tacitus, nor the Greek historian Cassius Dio (55.24.5), who wrote a century later, was able to provide detailed information on the auxiliaries as they were on the legions. Many auxiliary regiments certainly maintained a continuous existence over several decades as can be seen from the surviving epigraphic record. Nevertheless, when in 66 CE Vespasian was sent with an army to quell the Jewish rebellion, much of the auxiliary contingent was provided by Rome's Near Eastern client kings rather than drawn from the standing imperial army (Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.4.2). Considerable flexibility in the number of auxiliaries is likely to have been the order of the day, at least for much of the principate, just as it was in late antiquity where we are well-informed about the employment of federated Germanic troops. There is a question about the second century CE where information about auxiliary regiments becomes much denser due to the preservation of discharge diplomas granting Roman citizenship to their veterans (Spaul 2000). The several hundred small units known from these records have led some to the belief that they heavily outnumbered the legionaries comprising perhaps some 224,000 extra troops. As a result they estimate the total size of the army as 415,000 to 450,000 (Birley 1981, 39–43; Holder 2003; Rankow 2007, 71). But that seems unrealistic. When the France of Louis XIV felt compelled to expand its military forces to some 400,000 under the War of the Spanish Succession, it faced competition from several other very substantial powers across Europe. Not included in Table 15.1.2 focused on the Mediterranean world, England/Wales could muster some 292,000, the Netherlands 100,000, and Russia 170,000 (Tilly 1992, 79). The Roman empire did not nearly face the same sort of pressures and it is difficult to see which constellation of enemies could have necessitated such a buildup. But of course the premise of the maximalist argument is doubtful. It assumes legions and auxiliary regiments to have been maintained at full strength. Incidentally the larger the estimate of the army the less likely as a general proposition this becomes. All armies face problems of finance, desertion, depletion through loss, officers keeping dead men on the rolls to pocket their salary, and so on (Parker 1988, Murphey 1999). The bigger the army, however, the bigger in absolute terms the challenge becomes. It is one thing to credit the Roman government with the ability to avoid this problem in relation to a relatively restricted number of soldiers, for example, an elite guard of a few thousand men; it is quite another to state this as a general proposition in relation to what would in effect very likely have been the biggest standing army in European history before the Napoleonic Wars. When it comes to the size of the Roman army in general and the numerous and widely dispersed contingents of auxiliary troops, each much smaller than a legion, in particular, we really are treading on very thin

ice, and everything depends on conjecture and extrapolation. (p. 422) In this situation, analytical controls on our quantitative speculation are de rigueur. Realizing that the Roman empire, even on a conservative estimate, possessed an unusually large permanent, standing force, speaks in favor of adopting a cautious estimate of its size. Assuming parity between legionaries and auxiliaries, a peacetime estimate of some 230,000–270,000, plus a not insignificant fleet, would not be at all surprising, even if it may seem controversial by some standards (cf. Table 15.1; slightly higher are, e.g., Luttwak 1976; Goldsworthy 2007, 118; Hopkins 2009).

Even so, by keeping up the strength of the army at twenty-five to twenty-eight legions, the Augustan settlement did not quite see a return to the lower level of state capacity before the mobilization of the last two to three war-torn decades of the republic. In that respect, the imperial monarchy clearly remained bound to the military. Major conquests continued as an important aspect of what it meant to rule the empire: It was not a coincidence that the reign of Augustus saw some of the most dramatic territorial expansion in Roman history. The defeat of Antony also brought destruction on his ally, the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra. This left Augustus in control of Egypt, a fabulous prize, the most productive agricultural region in the Roman world. But that was not enough to satisfy the new emperor. All through his reign, Roman armies continued to push outward and onward. Most of this warfare took place in much less promising theaters. No comparable rewards came with the closing of the imperial frontier in northern Spain and its extension across the Balkans to reach the Danube; territorial control was here established in much more thinly populated regions. However, in his attempt to reduce the area between the Rhine and the Elbe to a province, Augustus reached the limits of the expansive potential of his armies; these plans had eventually to be abandoned. The underlying imperialist ambition, though, did not die. Annexation in Britain and Dacia, absorption of long-serving client kingdoms, and slow but steady expansion in the Near East bear testimony to the enduring value attached to conquests in Roman state ideology. During the principate enlargement of the empire remained central to the legitimacy of the monarchy, and emperors consequently preserved the aggressive potential of the army (Isaac 1993; Whittaker 1994; Sommer 2005).

Understandably therefore the imperial army remained substantial in absolute numbers and in excess of the bare minimum requirements of peacetime obligations (Eich 2009). Nonetheless, relative to the vast, even extraordinary expanse of territory under Roman control—much larger than at any time under the republic—the army remained only moderately sized (cf. Breeze and Dobson 1993, 120). It still left enough room to allow the emperors to cash in on a peace dividend. For the imposition of Roman hegemony on the greater Mediterranean world did in all likelihood cause a fall in the overall military costs borne by the region, not only in relation to the late republican civil war peak but also in more general terms as the armies of rivals and enemies were dismantled following defeat and the frequency of warfare decreased inside the enormous imperial territory. The other side of the coin was that resources had to be husbanded carefully to make ends meet. Substantial warfare on more than one front at a time was likely to overstrain the capacity of the imperial government. A rigid economy of force governed (p. 423) and constrained

the deployment of the Roman military; it was not to be wasted indiscriminately (Luttwak 1976, 50 and chap. 2; Mattern 1999, 94–98; Bang 2007; Hopkins 2009, 196). Hence we find, for instance, that most routine patrolling and combat of low-level threats from brigands and other such enemies of the “peace” had to be left to local, independent militias (Brunt 1990, chap. 11; Brélaz 2005).

An important aspect of the transition to a “peacetime army”—the expression of Brian Dobson—was that the impact of military mobilization was reduced and its effects on society, more particularly on Italy, stabilized. Under the republic, citizens had been liable to military service for up to sixteen years. Though the length of service had been growing, most recruits did not anticipate serving the maximum term. With Augustus, the old maximum became the minimum. The result was a significant reduction in the number of recruits, though even so state resources were stretched. Many had to stay in the ranks for longer, and soon twenty-five years became the standard service requirement (Scheidel 1996, 132–137). In the course of the first century CE, Italians ceased to constitute the majority in the legions, and soldiers were increasingly recruited in the provinces where they were stationed. All this eased pressure on the population of Italy and spread the burden of military service on a wider segment of the peoples of the empire (Forni 1953). The old republican army had made extensive use of auxiliary troops supplied by various types of allies and subjects to support the legions. Under the monarchy, the net was cast even more widely so that contributions were sought from an extraordinary range of different communities, from Batavians on the Rhine to Palmyrenes (who provided archers) out of the Syrian desert (Spaul 2000, 209–216, 434–436; Nesselhauf 1936, no. 69).

Military consolidation rested on institutional stabilization and continuity. With the transition to a standing army, legions acquired permanence. Of the legions in service under Augustus, eighteen were still in existence when Cassius Dio (55.53.3–6) was writing his Roman history under the Severans (Breeze and Dobson 1993, chap. 7). Many of the noncitizen auxiliary regiments also gradually took on a more lasting existence. The institutional continuity of the army was an important pillar of the imperial order; it helped foster a separate identity for the soldiery who, to some extent, constituted a community apart or at least stood on the margins of regular society. The soldiers enjoyed special legal privileges but were also subject to particular constraints. A ban on marriage, probably introduced already under Augustus, was intended to prevent the warriors of the state from forming local attachments and ensure that the army would remain mobile and deployable. In practice, it was often tolerated that soldiers would form more lasting liaisons with women in the localities where they were stationed. But till Septimius Severus finally, in an ostentatious gesture of goodwill, bestowed the right of marriage on the servicemen, such families existed in a juridical twilight zone (Campbell 1978). The army was a fraternity, a total social institution, differentiated to a remarkable degree from the rest of society (Shaw 1983, 144–150; MacMullen 1984; Haynes 1999; Phang 2001; Scheidel 2007b; *contra*: Alston 1995). Drill and extensive exercises served both to

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

ensure combat efficiency and to firm up discipline and the cohesion of military regiments (Lendon 2005, chaps. 10–11; Phang 2008).

(p. 424) The loyalty of this formidable body was directed toward the emperor by numerous ceremonies and occasional acts of benevolence (Campbell 1984). The soldiers were required to pledge personal allegiance to the emperor; the religious calendar of the various regiments was punctuated by a monotonous stream of cultic sacrifice for and to the emperors, living and deified: “On the 3rd Ides of March: Because the Emperor, Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander was named emperor, to Jupiter an ox.... On the Kalends of August: For the birthday of the deified Claudius and the deified Pertinax, to the deified Claudius an ox, to the deified Pertinax an ox” (Fink 1971, no. 117, col. I, 23–26, col. II, 23–24). The special relationship between emperor and army was cemented by cash donatives on special occasions such as accession and jubilees. By and large, emperors succeeded in keeping control of the army, not to the extent of completely depoliticizing it but enough to contain the legions for long stretches of time. Instrumental to this remarkable achievement was the decision to garrison much of the army in the frontier regions away from Italy. Geographically dispersed and divided under separate military commanders, the provincial armies were unable to act in unison and were too far from the center of power to influence politics at court decisively (Hopkins 2009, 190–195; balanced by Birley 2007 and Flaig 1992). However, interference of the frontier legions always remained a latent possibility. This was the secret of empire that Tacitus (*Histories* 1.4) saw revealed in the year of the four emperors when a rebellion by a governor in Gaul had set in motion the rapid collapse of Nero’s reign and unleashed a brisk civil war before Vespasian, the general sent to quell the famous Jewish rebellion, was able to place himself securely on the throne (69 CE). But such reenactments of the civil war drama were rare. A good indication of the dependence of the army on the monarchy is the fact that annual legionary pay was kept stable for a century, then raised from 225 to 300 silver denarii by Domitian and retained at that level for another century until the time of Septimius Severus.

One group of soldiers, though, was exceptionally well situated to affect the course of politics. With most of the army stationed safely away from Italy, the emperors retained in Rome a horse guard and the so-called praetorian guard, a corps made up of specially privileged infantry cohorts. These were key players in the politics of the principate (Absil 1997). Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, is said to have secured the support of these guards for his accession before that of the Roman senate (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7). When Caligula was assassinated, it was the praetorian guard that elevated Claudius to the purple and it was from the protective shield of their camp that he then went on to negotiate the acceptance of his monarchy with the senate. As the only sizable and strong military force left in Italy, the guard was protector of the monarchy but might also turn against the reigning emperor. Later in his reign Tiberius was almost sidelined as the commander of the guard, Sejanus, arrogated to himself increasing political power. The leadership of the guard seems invariably to have been involved in successful attempts at ruler assassination. Emperors attempted to control this potential king-maker by dividing the command of the guard between two prefects and selecting the incumbents not from

among their peers in the senate, but from the second tier of the Roman aristocracy, the equestrian order. It took more than two centuries of the imperial monarchy for such persons to become credible candidates for the purple, with the ill-fated usurpation of Macrinus in 217 CE leading the way. The praetorians, in short, had greater leverage over the government than the army in general and were able to secure many more “gifts” from the emperors attempting to buy their loyalty. With a strong vested interest in the continuation of the monarchy, the guard remained a firm bulwark of the throne, albeit not always of its current incumbent. (p. 425)

A key component of the army and the imperial state apparatus was the officer corps, many of whom were appointed directly by the emperor. Legionary commanders would receive their commissions as a benefice from the monarch. So would many of the aristocratic higher junior officers, for whom there were some 600 positions (Devijver 1976–2001; 1989), though often on the recommendation of the legionary commander. Imperial interest in appointments reached right down to the level of centurions (Statius, *Silvae* 5.1.94–98). These officers commanding the basic organizational units of some eighty men in the legions constituted the backbone of the Roman army. A substantial number, though far from the majority, of the close to 2,000 centurions owed their post or a promotion to the emperor. Others had received their rank at the instigation of the legionary commanders. But even then, the central imperial government seems to have kept records on those trusted junior officers. Many of them would see service with different regiments and units as they were promoted and might on discharge be able to sport a career marked by stationing in distant and widely dispersed regions. Their wider circulation helped to preserve the mobility and loyalty of an infantry army, many of whose units would often remain garrisoned in the same area for decades with all the risks this entailed of putting down strong roots in the host society (E. Birley 1988, 206–220; Jacques and Scheid 1990, 136–137; Breeze and Dobson 1993, 129–217). The organizational strength and institutional integrity of the military was firmed up by, relative to the rest of society, an extensive use of written records and documentation. Army units would keep detailed accounts of soldiers’ pay, spending, savings, and length of service. They also maintained regularly updated rosters of manpower resources detailing who were available for active duty, ill, fallen, away on special missions, or simply absent (Stauner 2004).

Military historians have often approached the Roman army with an image of the bureaucratic armies of the nineteenth century in their minds. As a consequence, they tend to overstate the level of standardization and uniformity aspired to, let alone achieved. No military academies or general staff existed to promote such programs of “modernization.” In the highest ranks, the Roman army remained under the leadership of, for lack of a better word, “amateurs,” that is, aristocrats who intermittently interrupted their life of leisure and politics to do a tour of the colors (Campbell 1975; Saller 1982, chap. 3). None of these observations are intended to belittle the institutional achievement represented by the Roman army. To a remarkable degree the emperors succeeded in forging an instrument of war that could be deployed effectively in shifting theaters around the empire. If we may borrow the terminology of Schmucl Eisenstadt (1963, part

1), it was a free-floating (p. 426) resource, at least to a large extent; it was a “universal” institution, not inextricably tied to any local community. As such the appropriate comparison probably lies rather with the military establishments of the complex premodern Asian empires, such as the Mughal armies fielded by the *mansabdari* service aristocracy, a patrimonial aristocratic cadre (Athar Ali 1997; Gommans 2002), and in particular the fabled Ottoman infantry corps of the janissaries (Murphey 1999)—constituted by a soldiery formally marked off from the rest of the population as the sultan’s “slaves,” supposedly without family attachments (and as in the Roman case, in practice often not quite so detached from society).

These armies functioned as the prop of imperial hegemony over diverse populations and composite territories. Their mobility and effective functioning were, in the Roman case, aided by the construction of a network of imperial highways that evolved to span the empire like a huge cobweb (Rathmann 2003; further Kolb 2000). Some territories were stabilized by the foundation of colonies of Roman veteran soldiers. Such communities of loyal, privileged, and, presumably, militarily capable men could be relied upon to rally to the support of government in times of unrest. It is well to remember that the Roman military did not only serve to protect the frontiers of the empire, it never really ceased to be also an army of occupation, a safeguard of imperial domination (Isaac 1993; Woolf 1993). Few reigns did not see one kind of rebellion or another flare up (Thompson 1952; Dyson 1971). Of these, the disastrous Jewish rebellion, which ended with the sack of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the siege of Masada, is the most famous (Goodman 2007). It is also quite representative in one crucial respect: it was a localized affair. Rebels might score an early victory on the field of battle. Despite the legions’ superior training, organization, and equipment, they would occasionally experience defeat at the hands of a ramshackle, but spirited peasant army. In the long run, however, such initial successes were normally unsustainable because rebels lacked any kind of supraregional organization and infrastructure of power to match that of the imperial government. As the emperor was able to pull in reinforcements from more subdued areas, rebellions were regularly ground down. Hegemony was restored because the uprising had been organizationally outflanked (cf. Mann 1986, 7).

Imperial state formation, then, did not produce that clear distinction between an internal pacified territory subject only to policing and outside military activity, which we have come to expect from the post-Hobbesian statecraft that developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Giddens 1986). The army always remained a threat to the subject population. Having imperial troops marching through one’s area was a mixed blessing. Civilian sighs of woe and complaints over abuses and predations usually followed in their trail (Mitchell 1976; Pollard 2000, 104–110). More importantly, as a political system, the empire had no clearly defined border. Rather it comprised territories under different degrees and modes of submission. At the center was Italy, privileged and tax-exempt, then the bulk of the empire divided into some forty to fifty taxpaying provinces, and, finally, a fluctuating number of client kingdoms and tribal chieftains. Not clearly bounded, the empire has aptly been described as having a mobile frontier zone where control (p. 427) gradually petered out (Whittaker 1994). We may extend this image

to cover the existence of an internal frontier as well. Some areas, difficult of access, low in population, or poor in resources, continued as pockets beyond the reach of government (Shaw 1984; 2000). Across the Roman world, much of the day-to-day maintenance of order and peace was left to the initiative of a motley collection of local militias. Palmyra, the caravan city in the middle of the Syrian desert, regularly fought off nomad raids to keep open the trading routes (Drexhage 1988; Young 2001, chap. 4). The intensity of the threat faced by Palmyra, and the level of organization mustered to meet it, may well have been abnormally high. But the basic challenge of combating brigands and other low-level threats existing on the margins of “civilized” society was not unusual. This was a matter that every city in the empire had to deal with more or less on its own, sometimes even to the applause of the emperor. “I praised you for your zeal and bravery,” Commodus wrote in a letter to the city of Boubon in Lycia, “that you hastened with such great enthusiasm to the arrest of the bandits, overcoming them, killing some, and capturing others” (trans. quoted from Lendon 1997, 137). Every now and then, however, such local resourcefulness and military/organizational capacity got out of hand. In Roman North Africa, a border dispute between the cities of Lepcis and Oea spiraled badly out of control early during the reign of Vespasian. “[F]rom small beginnings, it was soon conducted with weapons and battles,” we read in the terse reportage of Tacitus. The citizens of Oea had called the so-called Garamantes to their assistance. This frontier tribe went on to ravage the territory of Lepcis, whose population had to be rescued by the imperial army before order and business as usual could be restored (Tacitus, *Histories* 4.50; cf. *Annals* 12.54; Gutsfeld 1989, 81–86). Underneath the military hegemony of the emperor, local societies (and some more than others) preserved a measure of independent capacity, however curtailed and limited. It is no mere formality to note that below the level of imperial government, the realm consisted of some two thousand city-states with councils and annually elected magistrates. The empire was a composite medley of subject, but nevertheless largely self-governing communities; their political life mattered (Nörr 1969; 1979; Galsterer 2000).

The Court—Center of the World

Presiding over this complex amalgam of city-states, client kingdoms, and allied tribes, the emperors reigned as universal monarchs (cf. Bang and Kolodziejczyk 2012). Roman emperors liked to cut an awe-inspiring figure as solemn rulers of the world and boasted of the infinite variety of communities that sent embassies to their court from near and far in recognition of their boundless might. With a territory of some four million square kilometers and stretching from modern Scotland to Iraq, today the home of some forty countries, the staggering dimensions of the realm made credible the conceit that the empire equaled the world and Rome was (p. 428) its navel (Nicolet 1991; Whittaker 1994, chaps. 1–2; Sidebottom 2007; see map. 15.1). As such the empire may perhaps best be likened to an international society where the Roman monarch claimed preeminence among subject peoples as well as rival kings and states (cf. Watson 1992). This was a posture that the Romans increasingly began to adopt as they came to dominate the

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Mediterranean during the second century BCE. The dynasts of the late Roman republic habitually compared themselves to the greatest conquerors in history, vied with them, and measured their victories against the most dazzling exploits of the past. Alexander the Great became something of a favorite, an emblem of grandeur whose virtues were praised for emulation and faults criticized to be avoided. The imperial monarchy continued to elaborate this pattern of royalty (Spencer 2002). The Caesar would bow to no one, nor did he accept any equal; he was in a league of his own. When Pliny, a provincial governor, attempted to recommend to Trajan an ambitious canal-building project, left unfinished by the erstwhile kings of Pontus, he added a telling piece of exhortatory flattery to tickle the vanity of majesty: "I long to see completed by you what kings could only begin" (*Letters* 10.51.4). The emperor, Pliny implied, was more than a mere king, he was a ruler of rulers (Bang 2011a). Sovereignty, in short, was constructed, not on the basis of equality, but as hierarchical, graded, and contentious. Frequent wars and perennial rivalry lay at the root of this phenomenon. Some rulers and states were able better to assert themselves in the competition and had proven themselves to be greater than others; alone at the top was Rome (Isaac 1993; Mattern 1999). As Julius Caesar sought to justify his war against the Germanic king Ariovistus, an officially recognized friend of the *populus Romanus*, he presented him to the political classes in the capital as having had the audacity to think he could deal with Rome and its representative on equal terms. Surely such intolerable behavior deserved a lesson in humility. This king needed to be brought low—a job for the army (Caesar, *Gallic War* 1.34–36, 42–46; Brunt 1990, chap. 14).

But how was continuity of rule to be achieved? The army, as we have seen, was a guarantor of imperial and monarchical hegemony and preeminence, and it was in addition, by a wide margin, the biggest and most extensive institution of rule available to the emperors. But as a means of government it was inadequate, its usefulness severely limited. This was a fundamental paradox of imperial power. Small contingents of soldiers were occasionally allocated to assist tax collectors or accompany important and influential persons on the move. Sometimes, though technically illegal, centurions, as men of authority, were even approached to adjudicate civil disputes (Campbell 1984, appendix 1; Alston 1995, 81–96; Pollard 2000, chap. 3). Nevertheless, Roman territory was much too extensive and soldiers, who for the majority had to walk on their feet, were not mobile enough to make government through the army even a remote possibility (cf. Mann 1986, chaps. 5 and 8). In addition, diverting too many soldiers to sundry administrative and governmental chores risked jeopardizing the fighting capacity of the army. Its resources were insufficient even to protect the population from itself, except for a very select few communities, as Trajan insisted in a response to another missive from his governor Pliny (*Letters* 10.77–78; Bang 2007). The requirements of government demanded (p. 429) that alternative institutions be found to put civil rule on a stable basis. But an extensive and elaborate administrative bureaucracy was not readily at hand, nor even a genuine option.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

As was the norm in ancient societies, the republic and its empire had been governed by a group of so-called *honoratiros*, an aristocratic elite who employed their own vast households, retinues, and wealth in service of the commonwealth. The emperor had emerged out of this group to claim leadership. This meant two things: the imperial household now came to function as the center of government and the old pluralist republican system had to be tailored to fit the need of the monarchy for stable rule (Von Premerstein 1937; Gilierti 1996). To achieve stability, the emperor had to give attention to three sources of disturbance and volatility under the republic: taxation, the populace of Rome, and political competition among the elite. Next to the army, large companies of tax farmers had emerged as a powerful and destabilizing force of late republican politics. Enormous concentrations of aristocratic landed properties had been tied up under these. This potential source of organized opposition, alternative center of power, and cause of provincial disaffection was significantly curbed when the choicest provinces were taken away from them and government took over responsibility for collecting the land taxes from the numerous communities of the realm. From now on, tax farming was mostly restricted to the imperial customs and excise duties as well as public and imperial properties (Brunt 1990, chap. 17). Under the republican influx of plunder and tribute, Rome had grown dramatically to become the biggest city of the Mediterranean world. The capital of the empire dwarfed the surroundings (Morley 1996). Feeding it was a major challenge and its urban masses, hungry and volatile, a potential source of instability. The emperors took responsibility for organizing the food supply and continued the late republican practice (since 58 BCE) of distributing a free grain dole to some 150,000 to 200,000 people (Garnsey 1988, chap. 14; Erdkamp 2005, chap. 5). Coupled with extensive programs of monumental building and elaborate displays of public pageantry, this combined formula of “bread and circuses” transformed Rome into a splendid metropolitan stage for the monarchy. The unparalleled level of conspicuous consumption made manifest and projected to the subjects and the world the unmatched power of the ruler (Veyne 1976, 630–693; Zanker 1987).

At the core of this system was the imperial household staffed by a multitude of slaves, freedmen, and eunuchs. All these were, in a very direct sense, the emperor’s men. Marked by the ignominy and social opprobrium of servitude, this group would never be able to constitute an aristocracy that could compete with the emperor in its own right. Quite the reverse, the more fortunate and trusted of these retainers depended on their position in the imperial household to afford them with status and privileges that would raise them above the common lot of servants and ordinary people. This made the imperial slaves and freedmen eminently suited to manage the central administrative tasks of government (Boulvert 1970; Weaver 1972; Dettenhoffer 2009). To be sure, as all trusted agents, they too would occasionally manipulate their master and divert resources and policies to (p. 430) serve their own purposes rather than those of the monarch. But the unrestrained abuse that has been heaped on these house-servants by generations of aristocratic commentators was ill-deserved and says little of their loyalty, let alone ability. The critique was born of resentment among the social elites that people of lowly status could serve in positions of influence and exercise power, also over those of higher rank

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

(e.g. Pliny, *Letters* 7.29; 8.6; Cassius Dio 73.10.2; 73.12–14). Socially “gelded,” to borrow an expression of Ernest Gellner (1983, chap. 2), more than most other groups the slave-domestics of the imperial household could be relied upon to identify with the interests of the ruler. This was their *raison d’être*, but also their great limitation. Government through such instruments alone would have been reduced to a feeble and fickle business, lacking in legitimacy and with little support in society, as Muslim rulers were later to experience at the end of the Abbasid Caliphate (cf. Crone 1980).

In Roman society, and the empire at large, aristocratic landowners represented a source of social power that could not be ignored. Their enormous accumulated wealth, command of vast retinues, and traditional authority constituted a concentration of power without and against which government could not easily function. They had to be admitted to share in the government of the monarch. Indeed, the Roman political elite expected this as its customary birthright; it had been defined and formed by its historical record of office-holding within the *res publica* (Afzelius 1935; Hopkins and Burton 1983a; 1983b). Julius Caesar had fallen victim of a conspiracy of nobles fearful that his dictatorship or sole rule would monopolize honor and leave no room for the rest of the nobility to seek distinction in the service of the Roman people (Rosenstein 2006, 379–380). This was an impulse which his heir came to understand well and knew how to tap. A successful monarchy, as Montesquieu pointed out, had to substitute honor and glory for republican political virtue (*De L’Esprit des lois* 1.3.6). Roman contemporaries explained the civil wars as an example of how ambition had broken through the bounds of virtue. No longer had the protagonists in the political competition been willing to bow to the interests of the common good and the *patria*. The monarchy, therefore, embarked on an ostentatious program for the restoration of public virtue (Livy, *History of Rome*, preface; Edwards 1993). But what it effected was a reaffirmation of the necessary preconditions for the state of monarchy: “preeminence, rank, and even a hereditary nobility.” This is the checklist provided by Montesquieu to which he added the demand for “preferences and distinctions” (*De l’Esprit des lois* 1.3.7). All these were lifeblood to the Augustan monarchy. Honor was harnessed and the combative republican order domesticated to serve the emperors (Lendon 1997).

The two aristocratic orders of Roman society, the timocratic equestrian and the political senatorial, received firmer demarcation as the criteria for inclusion were made more demanding and the formal insignia, privileges, and ceremony of rank suitably brushed up. Never before had the two orders appeared with such a dignified public posture (Rowe 2002). Senatorial status was even made hereditary through three generations. But most important was the distribution of offices. As members of the second tier of the aristocracy, prominent equestrians from among (p. 431) the high-ranking officers in the army were picked to serve in a small, but slowly expanding number of trusted positions within the imperial administration. By the mid-second century CE, the tally had run to 110 ranked in a hierarchy defined by four levels of pay (Pflaum 1950; 1960–1961; Devijver 1999). The majority of these positions were procuratorships created to manage the many imperial estates scattered around the realm and oversee the collection of taxes in some of the territories. In addition, the equestrians held the position of governor in a

number of minor provinces—Pontius Pilate for instance was in charge of Judea. In time, they also took over from the imperial freedmen the most significant secretarial positions within the emperors' households, overseeing accounts and correspondence among other things. Finally, but not least importantly, they were also given the three major prefectures of Egypt, Rome's grain supply, and the praetorian guard. The strategic significance of each of these three made it inexpedient to trust them to senators who formally counted as the emperors' peers and therefore in principle could turn into rivals for the throne if they were able to accumulate too much power (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.11)—how to handle the mighty servant, the proverbial “grand vizier,” has been a perennial headache of monarchs. While these equestrian positions were an innovation, and a personal service of the emperor, the monarchy also rested conspicuously on a claim to having restored the traditional republican constitution (Syme 1939; Raaflaub and Toher 1990). The key to this was the senate. The old republican hierarchy of magistracies (see above, chapter 14) was modified and geared to keep the senators actively engaged in ruling the empire. After their terms of office, senators continued to be employed abroad as governors and commanders of legions and at home in administrative posts. In the middle of the second century, approximately 160 some such positions existed (Hopkins and Burton 1983b, 160–161; Eck 2000, 227; 1974). As the number of consulships was significantly increased with the addition of suffect consuls to the customary two who gave their name to the year, the prospects for the average senator of reaching the highest ranks even improved under this regime. But instead of popular assemblies, it was now the emperor who functioned as the arbiter of senatorial careers. Most of the positions reserved for this class were in the ruler's gift to bestow and no senator could hope to make much progress against the express or tacit will of the ruler.

The character of this order has eluded generations of legal scholars trying to systematize and bring order to our understanding of the imperial monarchy (e.g., Mommsen 1887, 748; Bleicken 1995, 83; Drinkwater 2007). There was a pretense that the empire was shared, the princeps holding direct control of provinces with large military contingents while the senate and Roman people were responsible for the rest. Some scholars have thought in terms of a move toward a more constitutional form of monarchy as the years of innovation and experiment under the magnates of the civil war and the first emperors gave way to routine and tradition (Lucrezi 1982). But there are obvious limitations to the idea of a Roman constitutional monarchy. Confusion has been caused, not least, by the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, ever since the millenarian and republican revolutionary, Cola di Rienzo (1313–1354), used this large bronze inscription in support of his claim that the Roman people (p. 432) had the right to elect its leaders and the (Holy Roman) emperor (Collins 2002, chap. 2; Musto 2003, chap. 5). This law text spells out the numerous concrete details of Vespasian's imperial investiture: “he shall be permitted to make...a treaty with whom he wishes...to hold a meeting of the senate...and to make senatorial decrees...just as permission was given to the deified Augustus, to Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, and to Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus” (Dessau 1892–1916, no. 244/Sherk 1988, no. 82). But the illusion of a monarchy regulated by laws and a senate is dispelled by the presence of a discretionary clause authorizing the monarch to

do whatever he deems necessary for his government (Brunt 1977; further Capogrossi Colognesi and Tassi Scandone 2009). Although as a council the senate was peopled by the richest and most powerful men in the realm, it was never able to play the role of a deliberative body standing up to the monarch and monitoring his government. A strong identity deriving from its proud history was little help in this (Talbert 1984). The princeps already had available a large standing army and taxes in vast quantities paid by the provinces; he did not have to negotiate for control and disposition of these vital “sinews of power” (cf. Brewer 1988). Deprived of the two most important levers that parliaments were later able to use during the early-modern age to assert themselves against European kings, the senate had to play a different role.

The *lex de imperio* is a curious document. Strict economy and reason would not have required more than the blanket authorization of the acts of the ruler. Legitimacy, however, flows from the superfluous and acts of reassurance. So the document articulates the powers of the emperor as an accumulation of specific prerogatives. In this social universe custom was king and historical precedent all-important (cf. Peachin 2007). Rights were rarely thought of as generalized, but more often specific and particular, akin to a bundle of privileges (cf. Matthews 2000, 69–70; Humfress 2007, 121–132). Concern for the preservation of traditional rights and the etiquette of old forms was identified by Norbert Elias as a typical characteristic of court societies. Attempts at radical reform are rarely pursued because the cancellation of old institutions invariably undermines the dignity and ranks of established groups within the aristocracy (Elias 1969, 132–133). Change had to be accumulative and gradual. The power of the emperor should not be seen as unitary and defined by the republican constitution but as a complex composite (Lo Cascio 2000, 13–16). The heritage of the republic was compounded with the other sources of monarchical power, particularly the household and the army, to form a new political configuration: the imperial court (Wallace-Hadrill 1996; Winterling 1999; 2003; Pani 2003; Paterson 2007; Bang 2011c).

At the center was the ruler who had to appeal to the diverse constituencies of his court society and the wider realm to keep open the lines of communication and ensure support. Egon Flaig (1992) has spoken of the imperial monarchy as an acceptance-system. The princeps had to curry favor separately with three groups in society: the soldiery, the population of Rome, and the senate. However, to the persona of the military commander, the benefactor of the urban crowd, and the leader of the senatorial aristocracy, the princeps, others may be added. Precisely (p. 433) because the emperor was not solely defined within the republican order, but hovered above it, he was able to reach out beyond the confines of the institutions of the Roman city-state to address his complex and composite realm. To the Hellenizing elite, firmly entrenched across the eastern Mediterranean world, the emperor was happy to appear as a Greek *basileus*, a savior king or even Olympian Zeus (Oliver 1970, no. 50, line 10; Dio Chrysostomus, *Orations* 1–5; Millar 1977), available too as sponsor of the temple cult of the Jews in Jerusalem or guarantor of the age-old rites of the pharaoh that were performed in his name under the

eyes of the traditional priesthood of Egypt (Grenier 1995; Herklotz 2007; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 153, 157; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 16.14, 31–57). All these various groups claimed the ruler as the protector of their time-honored traditions.

The emperor was polyvalent, meaning different things to different men at the same time (Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1, chap. 7). His multiple identities are neatly refracted as separate rays in the prism of a retrospective prophesy—typical of those which tended to circulate about strange omens thought to have heralded the future rule of this or that emperor. The mother of Augustus, Atia, was said to have claimed that while asleep in the temple of Asclepius she had been impregnated by a snake and gave birth nine months later to a son who was clearly the offspring of Apollo. She had further dreamed that her intestines had been lifted to the sky and spread out across earth and heaven. In a matching dream her husband had seen the sun rising from her uterus (Suetonius, *Augustus* 94.4). The legend picks up several mythologies; it is a familiar fact that Augustus in his relations with the Roman public carefully cultivated a claim to enjoy privileged connections with Apollo, the god. The snake, meanwhile, echoes some of the tales related about the divine conception of Alexander the Great; while the whole notion of the mother's intestines stretched across the sky and the sun rising from her womb recalls the Egyptian goddess Nut. In short, the prophesy was constructed to speak to several audiences at the same time: Egyptian, Hellenic, and Roman (Grandet 1986; Herklotz 2007, 213–21). First recorded in *Discourses on the Gods* by the Helleno-Egyptian intellectual Asclepiades of Mendes, it circulated and was later included by the imperial secretary, Suetonius, in his early second-century Latin biography of the emperor and subsequently in the history of Rome written in Greek by Cassius Dio in the early third century (45.1.2–3).

Elevated, august, and numinous, supreme authority transcended individual traditions; it was aligned with the forces of the cosmos and things divine (Woolf 2001; Gradel 2002; Rehak 2006; cf. Bayly 1996: 18–27). Among the many strange marvels and miracles of human society recorded in his *Natural History*, Pliny also listed examples of exceptional political and military power. The intellectual vigor of a Julius Caesar or the triumphs of Pompey evoked wonder no less than a hippocentaur or men with dogs' heads (7.2.23; 7.3.35; 7.25.91–26.99). As high priests, the emperors had to invest considerable time and resources in the manifold rites and acts of divination of the Roman state cult to guarantee that their rule was in accordance with godly order. From all corners of the realm (and beyond), people brought back to the Caesars stories of strange occurrences, extraordinary creatures, (p. 434) and wonderful objects (Galen, *De Antidosis* 1.4; Phlegon, *Book of Marvels* 14.2–3; 34–35; Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture* 22; Edwards 2003; Murphy 2004; Naas 2011); the emperors cherished such gifts as proof that their rule was favored by the powers above and sometimes put them on public display to share this knowledge with the population (Pliny, *Natural History* 37.7.19). Few subjects would have been touched directly by all this ceremonial activity. But it formed part of that symbolical web “expressing the fact that [the monarch] is in truth governing” (Geertz 1983, 124). The arts of prophesy and astrology were, as the Dominican friar and author of the utopian classic *The City of the Sun*, Tommaso Campanella would teach, central tools of

government (1993 [1637]: 184). They confirmed to the ruler that his human realm was in harmony with the wider cosmos. In the imperial palace could be found expert astrologers as well as the venerable collection of ancient prophetic lore, the so-called Sibylline Oracles. Rule of the Caesars was to be providential (Suetonius, *Augustus* 31.1; 98.3; *Nero* 36.1; Mommsen 1872, no. 1871; *L'Année épigraphique* 2001, 2083). Under their paternal care, so was the claim, the world was made new again and mankind blessed with a return of the golden age, an era of peace, justice, and abundance. Between emperor and realm lay a mystic affinity, a physical sympathy. His personal health, moral as well as bodily, was directly mirrored in the condition of the empire. He was the benefactor of humanity, the clement fountain of justice, his bounty inexhaustible (e.g., Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*; Velleius Paterculus 2.124–26; Seneca, *De Clementia*; Beranger 1953; Veyne 1976; Zanker 1987).

This almost paradisiacal construction of kingship, celebrated in cascades of laudatory speeches and sumptuous floral imagery, left subjects free to project their wishes, dreams, and claims onto the emperor (e.g., Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 8–14). Across the provinces there gradually developed the practice of cultivating the ruler as a form of god. Provincial initiative seems to have been no less behind this phenomenon than centralized command (Price 1984). By organizing the cult, local elites were afforded with an opportunity to bask in imperial glory and mark themselves out as favored sharers in the ruling order. To be granted the privilege of erecting a temple dedicated to the emperor could be used by the host community and its elite to bolster its status and standing within provincial society (Friesen 1993). The distant and lofty figure of the Caesar was, so to speak, appropriated by such groups and mobilized strategically to fashion their identity as preeminent. Roman historians have been taught by Fergus Millar (1977) to think of the governmental style of the emperor as fundamentally passive. In the absence of a vast elaborate bureaucracy, the princeps could not normally aspire to pursue active and reformist policies in relation to the civilian population; rather he had to wait for the subjects to do the work and come to him. Once petitioned he might then respond. This is a pattern that is recognizable in most preindustrial monarchies. However, the intrusive and recurrent demand for taxes shows that, at least in the Roman case, some modification of this picture is required. And there are other considerations too (Elias 1969, 197; Hopkins 1978b; Bleicken 1982). If the ruler could strike an impassive pose, it was because he made people seek him out. The attraction of the court as an instrument of government was based on active appropriation. The ruler (p. 435) asserted himself through his command of key resources of social power. By their control of the empire, the state apparatus, and the wealth of the imperial household, the Caesars could place themselves as the arbiters of rank and privilege; they had in their hands a huge, diversified, and unrivaled store of patronage resources. Subjects had to approach the court if they wanted to share in the distribution of favors. High office, great honors, tax privileges, landed estates, as well as justice, even life itself, all this and more was in the emperor's gift to bestow (Millar 1977, chaps. 4–8; Saller 1982, chap. 2). An emperor ruled

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

by active discrimination, privileging some, dismissing others; that produced the gravitational pull of his court.

The old senatorial aristocracy had relatively feeble means of resisting this mechanism and preserving the integrity of the group. Office-holding had always been its defining feature. But as this was now very much an honor distributed by the monarch, the nobility came to depend on imperial favor. Students of court societies refer to this process as one of domestication of the highest reaches of the aristocracy: the reduction of proud (unruly) noblemen to groveling and calculating courtiers (Elias 1997, 2:388-395; Harris 2001, chaps. 9-10). Closely connected with this is a notion of the monarch as a Machiavellian mastermind ruthlessly manipulating and outmaneuvering the aristocratic elite to stay on top in the game of power. There is truth in this picture, but it is also one-dimensional. Roman emperors certainly from time to time terrorized sections of the elite. A number of prominent cases saw leading nobles mercilessly cut down to size because they had overstepped the bounds of that propriety which demanded that their quest for honor and distinction did not in any way overshadow the imperial majesty (Syme 1939, 308-310; Cassius Dio 51.24-25.3; 53.23-24; Suetonius, *Augustus* 66.1-2; Eck, Rufino, and Gómez 1996). However, the system also entailed serious risks for the ruler. A court functions by staging a contest between courtiers for access to the favors of the monarch. The potential gains were high and so were the stakes: competition was fierce. Many more contenders entered the fray than the monarch could possibly handle personally. Complex and fluid networks of patronage emerged, structured on the basis of proximity to the ruler. Those who had the emperor's ear were able to use this advantage to carve out a position for themselves as brokers between the ruler and the throngs of supplicants (Saller 1982, 74-78, 168-187); around the more influential of these persons, factions crystallized contending with each other for the "spoils of empire." The consequences of defeat could be devastating, with the winning faction moving in to cannibalize the resources controlled by the losers. Charges of treason followed by death sentences, exile, and confiscation of property periodically haunted the Roman court (Rutledge 2001). Threatened with the dire consequences of failure, or driven by plain ambition, others might take preemptive action. Attempts at assassination of emperors or rebellions orchestrated by high-ranking members of the elite happened often enough in Roman history. There were many failures, but also a number of successes. Four ruling dynasties managed to establish themselves in the span of 250-plus years from the accession of Augustus to the fall of the Severans. The emperor was locked as much into the vigorously agonistic politics of the court as was the aristocracy. Social energies were channeled upward and concentrated on the monarch; this enabled the (p. 436) emperor, even a mediocre one (Elias 1969, 197-200), to rule but might also see him crushed (Winterling 2003).

The court took its toll on all participants. Several imperial dynasties came and went, while most senatorial families were unable to take the strain. Despite the fact that senatorial status had been made hereditary, surprisingly few fathers were followed by their sons into the senate. The level of hereditary succession was low in absolute terms, and even lower than under the "open" political system of the republic (Hopkins and Burton 1983b). In each generation, the ranks of the senate had to be replenished with a

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

substantial cohort of entrants from new families. Suitable candidates came increasingly to be sought out from among the prominent and propertied of provincial society. By the middle of the second century, close to half of the senators hailed from outside Italy; by the early third, a small majority (Hammond 1957). It was a long, slow haul, but the court steadily broadened its geographical reach to effect a refashioning of the senatorial elite and integrate the foremost provincial landowners in the affairs of the emperor. The formation of a new, more empire-wide aristocracy, however, was an uneven process, reflecting the operation of patronage. Southern Spain and southern Gaul made an early contribution, followed by the Hellenized east, and then the North Africans (predominantly from Libya to eastern Algeria) (Lambrechts 1936; 1937; Eck 1970; Halfmann 1979; Talbert 1984, 29–39). Other areas were much less well represented, if at all. At any rate, it bears emphasis that in absolute numbers, the totals were small, amounting to a few hundred provincial aristocrats out of a population of some sixty to seventy million. The senate had a total membership of 600 and the equestrian service was recruited from what must have been a comparable number of families. The court only skimmed the very cream of provincial societies. Nothing more was needed.

Court government was not deeply penetrative; it operated a selection mechanism that was tailored to admit the few to the ambience of the ruler—those who represented the most powerful groups in society (Bang 2011c). They were the ones who could best afford the long and arduous journey, often over hundreds of miles, to arrive at the seat of the monarch and then elbow their way through the crowds of courtiers and supplicants. At court, mighty subjects could seek a career for themselves while others might strive to better their position at home by obtaining privileges or a favorable verdict in judiciary matters. The main, nitty-gritty business of government took place elsewhere than in the center. Accompanied by only a relatively small administrative staff, an emperor such as Hadrian could spend years traveling from one end of the realm to another without visible damage to the system of rule. While playing the role as arbiters of aristocratic society, the emperors depended on the organizational capacity of such elite groups to run the empire on the ground by manning the councils and performing the magistracies of the numerous cities that made up most of the empire. To assist this broader aristocratic elite, comprising perhaps some 100,000 adult males and their families (on the rough assumption that on average the approximately two thousand cities would have had fifty members of their councils), the emperors sent into the provinces governors as delegates of the court. Equipped with the language of modern bureaucratic (p. 437) administration, students of prosopography and epigraphy have charted with painstaking care the development of the imperial service and its personnel (Hirschfeld 1905; Pflaum 1950; 1960–61; Eck 2000; 1974). But with the senatorial and equestrian branch of the imperial administration running to a little less than 300 positions in total by the middle of the second century, of which a good half were posted to the provinces for short tenures normally of one to three years' duration, the conceptualization was and is anachronistic. "We have come to meet you, all of us...greeting you with joy, all welcoming you with cries of praise, calling you our savior and fortress, our bright star.... Now the sun shines brighter, now we seem to behold a happy day dawn out of darkness" (Menander Rhetor

2.381, trans. Russell and Wilson 1981). These exuberant phrases of greeting, suggested as suitable in a Greek manual of rhetoric for someone having to welcome the Roman governor, are not those offered to a new bureaucratic administrator, but to an aristocrat arriving in the province to rule as a small replica of the emperor, more in the nature of a viceroy or Persian satrap. To perform the role as the decorous leader of provincial society, the governor could get by with a surprisingly lean establishment. Accompanying the governor would be a selection of his own household servants and junior political friends together with normally one officially appointed senatorial legate or deputy. In addition, one would find either a senatorial or equestrian financial officer present as well as a small number of imperial slaves and freedmen. Leaving out variation in the details, such in broad terms were the civil contours of Roman governmental authority in the provinces. For parts of the year, the governor would tour his province to hold assizes or *durbars* where he would set up court to hear the complaints of provincials, regulate their conflicts, give verdicts, and confirm old and grant new privileges and honors (Burton 1975; Meyer-Zwiffelhofer 2002; Eich 2005: 352).

A few Egyptian documents indicate that business could be brisk on these occasions. During the three days of one assize the governor of Egypt seems to have been deluged with almost two thousand cases and petitions (Oates, Samuel, and Welles 1967, no. 61; Hunt 1927, no. 2131). Rather than documenting the wide reach of central government, this example accentuates its limitations (*pace* Ando 2000, 376–377; Haensch 1994). With barely a minute available on average for each presentation, the decision, eventually published months later in Alexandria, could hardly have been arrived at through anything approaching a thorough judicial inquiry. For the governor, it was often difficult to penetrate the thickets of local provincial societies and avoid being dragged into conflicts and intrigues that he could not comprehend (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96–97). Usually his tenure of office was short, to prevent him from consolidating his position and becoming a rival to central government; his staff was of modest size; and his tools of enforcement few. In these circumstances, the sensible solution would normally be to side with tradition, with the way things were usually done (Kehoe 2007; cf. Kelly 2011, chap. 7 for the complementary role of state law and private dispute settlement). Custom carried the advantage that, in general, interests would already have been vested in its continuation; there would be a configuration of social power that could be expected to back it up and ensure its continued functioning with the minimum of support that government was (p. 438) capable of. It is characteristic that the imperial rulers would sometimes choose to confirm privileges claimed by communities, even though the basis of their demands was recognized as spurious, because these usurped rights had become established and customary practice. Better pragmatically to accept and reinforce such privileges than upset or weaken the underlying social order (Mommsen 1873, no. 781; Mommsen 1872, no. 5050).

The Localization of Power: Provincial Elites, the Dialog of Privilege, and the Fiscal Constraints of Empire

Such “government without bureaucracy,” as it has aptly been phrased (Garnsey and Saller 1987, chap. 2), worked because tradition tended to reinforce the position of the most powerful segments of provincial society. With the later experience of European state formation in mind, we can see that one of the most noticeable aspects of the Roman case is the creation and financing of a large standing army without initially developing an elaborate civilian bureaucracy to administer the imperial possessions (Rosenstein 2009). Customary rule, however, did not fossilize social relations; in practice it spawned a process that saw local, mostly landowning, elites strengthen their hold on provincial resources and enhance their position in society. It was on these groups that the imperial government relied to take care of the business of administration in the local city councils and the collection of the tribute and taxes that financed the army and the other expenses of the emperor. To the imperial authorities, backing the order of tradition meant supporting and adding to the privileges of the few. “Divide and rule” was an iron law of empire necessitated by the need to extract more from provincial communities than was put into them; not everyone could benefit equally (Brunt 1990, chap. 12; Bang 2009). Across the Roman world, elites responded to the invitation to share in the power of the empire and administer its peace on the ground—to be sure, some with greater enthusiasm than others. At bottom the alliance was, as Michael Mann (1986, chap. 9) has taught us, an example of “compulsory cooperation.” But this also offered opportunities. All over the empire, governing elites, sometimes after some initial foot-dragging, gradually oriented themselves toward the models of aristocratic high culture propagated by the imperial court.

This process has often been addressed under the heading of “Romanization,” a term that is now controversial, but equally difficult to avoid. Anyhow, some qualification and modification is required. Most importantly, the development in question was not the result of a centrally directed policy, or only to a very limited extent, but depended as much on provincial initiative (Woolf 1998). In that respect, a parallel may be sought in the conversion of Christian and other provincial elites (p. 439) and populations to Islam under the Abbasid Caliphs. Here, too, the change was rarely effected by the active efforts of, let alone forced by, royal government, but was rather the result of attempts by the converts to assert themselves, better their position within the Muslim imperial order, get access to more of its privileges, and avoid discriminatory measures such as the poll tax imposed on non-Muslim subjects: emulation instead of command (Hodgson 1974, 1:301–308; Berkey 2003, 117–118, chap. 17. Cf. Crone 1980, 49–55). In the Roman case, however, the cultural model was both less firmly defined and less egalitarian in its appeal. No single book contained its truths, and no simple set of rules prescribed the proper behavior of the initiates. Considerable variation prevailed, therefore, in how local elite groups responded

to the hegemonic culture and selected from its elaborate repertoire, courtly and urban (cf. Woolf 2003, 212–215). Much depended on the specific basis of their power. Tribal chieftains living on the border of the desert in North Africa (Mattingly 1995); landowners in the thinly populated and urbanized northwest; priestly families of the great temple estates in Anatolia and Syria (Dignas 2002); rabbis in the villages of Palestine; and the gentry of the densely urbanized areas of Asia Minor (Dmitriev 2005) and proconsular Africa (Lepelley 1979), all differed widely in how they articulated their position within the imperial order and in their available resources (Mattingly 1997b; Alcock 1997. Cf. Goodman 1987; Roymans 2005). Nevertheless some general trends may be discerned. Among elites in the western part of the empire, Latin language, civic monuments, and, in time, Roman citizenship became marks of attainment. The appeal of the latter, on the other hand, was always less in the eastern part of the empire (Sherwin-White 1973), where Greek had for a long time consolidated its position as the language of power and a well-established urban culture already commanded the patriotic loyalties of its elites. Here new delight in gladiatorial contests and urban baths merged with an insistent “cult” of Hellenic identity. Conspicuously expensive lifestyles, graced with polished speech from rhetorical training, philosophical study, athletics, and public service, combined to produce a starker emphasis on rank and hierarchy. Society became more aristocratic and imperial, but it did to a significant extent “stay Greek” (Rogers 1991; Woolf 1994; Swain 1996; König 2005).

Roman power thus gradually reoriented the coordinates of cultural life and social hierarchies (Wallace-Hadrill 2008). Few groups were left unaffected by the processes of empire. But this did not make them all part of a discourse based on a shared sense of being Roman, however varied the actual outcome, as recently assumed (Revell 2009). Not only was there no idea that people needed to become Roman to be loyal subjects, the majority population did not even receive an invitation. For most of the principate, Roman citizenship remained a privileged status. When under the Flavian dynasty (69–96 CE) cities in the Hispanic provinces were granted urban charters on the Roman model, citizenship formed part of the package, but as a reward given to members of the elite after they had held civic offices (*Lex Irnitana* 21, in González 1986). Later when Caracalla did bestow Roman citizenship on virtually the entire free population of the empire, he nevertheless still felt free to expel from Alexandria what he described with angry contempt as “the (p. 440) Egyptians”; these wayward members of the peasant majority were to return to the countryside and till the fields (*Papyrus Gissensis* 40.2.16–29; trans. Johnston 1936, 255). The nineteenth-century formula of turning “peasants into Frenchmen” (Weber 1976) and other nationalities, which governments and reformers worked so hard to put into practice to make the majority populations identify with the state, would have struck the Roman world rulers as distinctly odd. They never dreamed of transforming the peasant masses into full members of imperial society (pace Guerber and Hurlet 2008, 104). Theirs was a privileged and city-dominated order that left much of the countryside in a state of subjection. The scenario we should imagine is probably not far from the situation known from other extensive premodern land empires such as the Ottoman in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. As in the Roman world, this empire did

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

generate some common cultural trends that affected the population across regions and to some extent classes, in short something that could be perceived as “Ottomanization.” But this was never linked with any common, shared identity. The Ottoman empire was a polyethnic conglomerate that sought to organize and nest multiple identities in a hierarchy below that of the imperial ruling class (Braude and Lewis 1982; Barkey 2008).

By the same token, attempts to see the dissemination of high culture as the expression of the formation of an empire-wide Roman consensus (Ando 2000; Lobur 2008) need to be tempered by the fact that the majority of the population was either excluded from or only marginally involved in the dialog between court and local elites. Widespread illiteracy and confinement of the written word to the media of handwriting and carved inscriptions imposed very real limits on the reach of communication (Harris 1989). Even between government and provincial aristocracies, the density of the dialog was very uneven across the empire. A good diagnostic indication may be found in the habit developing among provincial communities of erecting statues of reigning emperors. From a recent archaeological survey, it appears that the vast majority was put up in a mere handful (if Italy is counted in) of the empire’s approximately fifty provinces. The small province of Achaëa alone has yielded almost as many such statues as all the other provinces (except Italy, which was not a province) to the north of the Mediterranean from the Black Sea to Scotland combined (Højte 2005, 658). In fact, we seem to be faced with an almost ideal-typical example of the thin integration of cosmopolitan elites, cutting across local and regional cultural boundaries, that Ernest Gellner (1983, chap. 2) and Benedict Anderson (1991) identified as characteristic of preindustrial and preprint societies. Rather than a consensus, in these terms, the Roman empire formed an *ecumene*, a Greek term that has gained currency among world historians to denote a universalizing yet fractured elite discourse comprising the world’s diversity (Bang 2010; cf. Bayly 1996). One could become Roman and still preserve one’s position and rights within the old local order.

A common characteristic of this ecumenical dialog was a celebration of a monarchical ideal emphasizing accessibility, moderation, and economy. Ruler and governors were to be attentive to the wishes of landed aristocracies, husband imperial resources carefully, and avoid introducing new taxes to burden their loyal (p. 441) subjects (Cassius Dio 72, 33, 1-2; 72, 35-36; 74, 5-8; Herodian 2.3-4; Bang 2009, 104-105, 109-111; Noreña 2001; 2011; Walker 1976-78, vol. 3). Under this regime, particularly favored individuals, groups, and communities managed to secure for themselves grants of immunity from taxation, wholly or in part (Reynolds 1982). Such rewards were given to solidify support for imperial authority but necessarily only touched a minority of provincial elites. The rest, however, also found ample remuneration for willingly cooperating with the Roman government. Most communities seem to have defrayed the imperial tribute collectively and so it was up to the local men in power, often organized in city councils, to distribute the burden and gather the taxes (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1432-33; Hopkins 1980, 121n59; Digest 50.15.4.2; Brunt 1990, 340-341). This was a position they were normally able to benefit from, and in more ways than one. Within the territory of the city, taxes might be shifted onto the shoulders of other property holders and the villages of the peasantry. The basic mechanism may be seen at work when communities were punished (as they

sometimes were) for acts of disloyalty by being demoted from urban status, annexed as a gift to a neighboring city-state, and thus, implicitly, laid open to the exploitation of others. Conversely, aspiring elites would seek to win city status for their own community to avoid this drain on their resources (e.g., Dessau 1892–1916, no. 6091; Van Dam 2007, 368–372; Cassius Dio 75.14.2–3; Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.5–7; Garnsey and Saller 1987, 26–40). The very imposition of an imperial tax, most of which rested on agriculture, therefore, tended to tilt the balance of social power in the countryside and reinforce the predominance of the urban-based elite owners.

Additionally, however, as these local elites got to administer the tax flow, they would also often have been able to siphon off some of the tributary proceeds to line their own pockets. It would be rash to treat this phenomenon as a simple question of corruption. “Wastage” was a precondition for the smooth operation of a system that at all levels relied on aristocratic elites to employ their own resources in its service. They had to be allowed to benefit, and the imperial state was in no position to prevent them. This was the graft that prized open provincial societies and allowed government to tap into the wealth of the empire’s mostly agricultural economy (MacMullen 1988, 58–129; Bang 2008, chap. 2). “Not everything, not always, not from everyone” (Digest 1.16.6.3), the maxim quoted by Ulpian, the king of Roman jurisprudence, to guide Roman governors on the issue of personal gain from public service, may be extended to cover other groups of the political elite. It was a question of maintaining a balance and reaching a *modus vivendi*. Higher-level officials were reminded, by the occasional conduct of trials in the senate admitting a hearing to provincial complaints, not to take their activities of self-enrichment beyond the wide bounds of the tolerable. Too grasping an exercise of power risked souring relations with provincial elites and thereby jeopardizing the cooperation between government and local landowners that was necessary for imperial taxation to function (Saller 1982, 164–166; Brunt 1990, chap. 4). In similar fashion, the activities of local aristocracies were accepted as long as they did not seriously undermine the capacity of communities to defray their customary taxes. This was the crucial matter.

(p. 442) Institutionally the system was regulated through a running dialog between government and urban elites over the distribution of privilege and taxation (Coriat 1997, chap. 5; Burton 2002). But in these negotiations, the latter were more often than not one step ahead of distant central authority; they held the keys to local communities; they knew the countryside; and they organized the administration on the ground (Bang 2011, 184–187; Brown 1992, 22–24; MacMullen 1988, 118–120). A virtual barrage of protestations, surviving in legal writings, about the oppressive burdens imposed by imperial government is testimony to the vocal capacity of this group to make its interests heard (Wickham 2011). Illustrative of the basic problem is an edict issued by the prefect of Egypt in response to alleged abuses committed in the name of central authority (Dittenberger 1903–1905, no. 669, trans. in Sherk 1988, no. 80). Among the regulations of this Tiberius Julius Alexander was a ban on the practice of confiscating land and property from third parties, which they had come into by contracting with people that “had obligations to the public account.” Behind such seemingly rapacious conduct, however, one may equally well detect attempts to counter ruses spun by local officials to hide away

wealth otherwise owed to the state by transfer to kin and friends. In general, resources were constantly drifting out of the purview of central government. Temporary privileges and current practice tended in no time to slide into immutable custom or fasten into law, “unless prevented with force,” as one jurist put it (Oliver 1989, no. 40, lines 14–17; cf. Dessau 1892–1916, no. 423). A countervailing force to this trend was produced by the introduction of provincial censuses to record people and property (Neesen 1980; Bagnall and Frier 1994; Duncan-Jones 1994, chap. 4; Jördens 2009, cf. Nicolet 1991). Coverage as well as frequency varied much from province to province. Egypt seems to have attained an impressive cyclical regularity, with the census taken every fourteen years, while in other places half a century or more might pass between censuses. This did provide government with some hold on provincial aristocracies, enough in fact at first to provoke rebellion in some regions (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.117–18; Tacitus, *Annals* 6.41; Millar 1993, 46). But most of the record keeping and registration took place within the cities and villages—a procedure that left much scope for manipulating the registers to the advantage of the various local elite groups. During the principate, tax arrears owing to central government tended to accumulate. Emperors responded by making a virtue out of necessity. Occasionally, they would declare a festive or benign cancellation of tax arrears and sometimes order the records burnt in a public bonfire (*L'Année Epigraphique* 1948, 109; Dessau 1892–1916, no. 309; Cassius Dio 72.32.2). Such gestures of ostentatious magnanimity allowed them to pose as benevolent lords caring for the welfare of their subjects but benefited mostly the privileged and well-to-do. They were the ones with sufficient power and influence to postpone and delay payment of taxes for long enough to be in a position to enjoy the gift (MacMullen 1987; cf. Zelin 1984, 228–29).

Across the empire, both the form and level of taxation varied widely with local conditions. But in general, taxes seem to have remained stable (Garnsey and Saller 1987, 103). During the principate, few incidents are known of emperors attempting to step up provincial tributes. The most prominent exception to this rule, Vespasian, (p. 443) is telling (*Suetonius*, Vespasian 16.1). His measures were introduced in an effort to restore the tottering imperial finances after the chaotic civil war, which brought him to power, and did in part only revoke some of the concessions and gifts made to win support by the other ill-fated contenders for the throne. Normally, however, the financial situation of the emperors was less strained and the pressure to increase taxation correspondingly less. Any attempt to gauge the total tax burden imposed by the imperial government on the subjects is bound to remain speculative. But analytical deduction paired with comparative historical experience may help to narrow the limits of the plausible. The most convincing estimates see imperial taxation as moderate. It is possible to form a considered, very broad estimate of the cost of the army based on our knowledge of basic legionary pay. The resulting totals seem to locate expenditure by the imperial government in the range of 5 to 7 percent of gross domestic product (Hopkins 1980; Garnsey and Saller 1987, chap. 5; Lo Cascio 2007, 622–626). Much higher levels would require us to take a very pessimistic view of the size of the Roman economy, with productivity barely above subsistence and a relatively small population. Both these latter propositions, however, seem implausible. Archaeologists uniformly agree that material culture was more diverse

and copious under the Roman empire than both before and after. Likewise, landscapes bear many traces of busy human activity and so presumably of “healthy” levels of population (Ward-Perkins 2005). Alternatively, very high levels of nonmilitary spending would have to be hypothesized to boost the proportion of the economy controlled by the imperial government. But this exercise cannot be taken very far. A view of Roman state finances that did not allocate a dominant position to the military in the budget would not be credible. Fiscally, most states in preindustrial history were hard-pressed to boost their armies to the scale on which the Roman empire permanently maintained a standing force. The empire, of course, also drew on a much larger territorial base than most others. This explains why the emperors were able to finance the enormous burden of the army; but it is difficult to believe that they governed under conditions of such fiscal ease that their other expenditures would have been able to rival or even surpass the military (*pace* Rathbone 2007, 174–175, cf. Eich 2009, who see the costs of the army as a fiscal burden weighing down the principate and rendering its foundations unstable).

The development in the precious metal contents of the main imperial silver coinage is a good diagnostic indicator of the fiscal health of the regime. Overall, they reveal a situation characterized by stability from the reign of Augustus till the 160s CE, but with a tendency to a small or moderate decline in the silver contents (see Walker 1976–1978, vol. 3, chap. 4; Butcher and Ponting 2005; Howgego 2009; Ponting 2009; <http://sace.liv.ac.uk/romansilver/home>; Elliott 2012, chap. 2). The main “culprit” behind the fall was Nero, whose vast “civic” expenditures, particularly in the wake of the great fire in Rome in 64 CE, may be supposed to have provoked the debasement of the silver coinage (Christiansen 1988). But none of the succeeding emperors were able to restore the silver denarius to its former level. An attempt under Domitian proved short-lived, not least because he raised army pay—the first emperor since Augustus to do so—by a third from 225 to 300 denarii per (p. 444) legionary. If we look back to the protection cost model introduced above, we may (under the inspiration of F.C. Lane) add a further dimension to our understanding of the hegemony imposed by the Romans on the greater Mediterranean. One part of the peace dividend, or monopoly profit, enjoyed by the Roman state was spent on maintaining a large standing army. But this could be supported within a regime of moderate and stable taxation. The other main group to benefit was the local aristocracies who were able to profit handsomely from their administration of the imperial peace. The moderate level of expenditure sustained by the imperial government left plenty of room for them to claim a considerable share of peasant surplus production; and the greater control over the peasantry, which collaboration with the imperial authorities had afforded them, made it possible to realize this potential gain (Hopkins 1980: 121; Garnsey & Saller 1987: 26–33). Such was the foundation of the much-celebrated, calm, and uneventful peace of the second-century CE Antonine emperors that Gibbon thought blessed by “furnishing very few materials for history,” otherwise “little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind” (1993, 1:89).

The Roman Empire IIThe Monarchy

More nuances still emerge in the picture of imperial taxation if a dynamic element is introduced to the model: population. Demographers generally believe the population of the empire to have grown from Augustus till the mid-160s when a pandemic, the so-called Antonine plague, hit the empire (Frier 2000). A plausible estimate would see the figure rise from approximately 50 to 70 million, a 40 percent increase (Scheidel 2007). Assuming that per capita income remained the same during this process, the economy would have expanded at a similar rate (Bang 2008, 122–127). The devaluation of the coinage, on the other hand, would more or less have annulled the effect of Domitian's pay increase on real state expenditure. If taxation remained stable, proportionately, the government should then have been able to expand its costs in tandem with the economy. The number of legions rose moderately from the low of twenty-five at the end of Augustus's reign to some twenty-eight or twenty-nine. If this is indicative of the state budget in general, expenditure would have grown merely by 16 percent. One interesting hypothesis to come out of this is that the share claimed by the central state in the economy might well have been shrinking marginally during the first two centuries of the principate. This interpretation carries the added attraction that it makes it easier to understand the need of imperial government to reduce the precious metal contents in the silver coinage even during this period of relative stability. A step of this nature would have been unlikely had the imperial fiscus been awash with extra proceeds from an expanding economy (see further Table 15.2).

The Antonine plague appears as a real turning point in imperial history (Frier 2000, 815–816; Scheidel 2002; Jongman 2006; skepticism: Bruun 2007, and cf. Scheidel forthcoming). The fiscal equilibrium on which the principate had rested was broken or at least shaken. In the following decades as the economy shrank along with the population, the government would have found it increasingly difficult to finance its military obligations without encroaching on the (growing) share of peasant surplus production to which the provincial aristocracies had become (p. 445) accustomed. It may well be coincidental, nevertheless it is striking that a number of imperial rulings begin to crop up in the documentary record from the late second and third centuries showing the emperors defending the rights of peasant communities on imperial estates (Hauken 1998). As contractors, tax collectors, and urban authorities, members of the local elites emerge in these conflicts as trying to squeeze primary producers harder. But in this case, their activities impinged on the economic interests of the emperors. In their capacity as landlord, they had to curb the demands made by middlemen to preserve the economic health and rent-paying capacity of producers living on their estates (Kehoe 2007). Competition over the distribution of peasant surplus production between imperial government and provincial aristocracies seems to have been intensifying (cf. Hopkins 2000).

Table 15.2. Army Expenditure and the Economy of the Roman Empire

The Roman Empire IIThe Monarchy

Year	Population size	Army size	Army costs (nominal)	Army costs (debased)
9 CE	100	100	100	100
150 CE	130	116	151	118
150 CE	140	116	151	118
150 CE	140	130	173	135

Note: This table attempts, in broad and simplified terms, to model the probable development of the weight of army and state expenditure in the Roman imperial economy between the age of Augustus and the reign of Antoninus Pius. The year 9 CE has been adopted as baseline (100) because the imperial army after the loss of three legions against the Germanic coalition of Arminius was at its smallest. By the time of Antoninus Pius it had climbed from 25 to 29 legions. At the same time, the population is believed to have risen from some 45–50 to 60–70 million. Assuming a steady per capita income the aggregate imperial economy would have grown some 30–40%. The pay of the soldiers was increased by one-third under Domitian. Combined with the rise in the numbers of legions, this would have caused the nominal costs of the army under Antoninus to be 50% higher than under Augustus. During the same period, however, the denarius was moderately debased. The silver contents were reduced from 3.65 grams to 2.85 per denarius or a little more (Walker 1976, 110–117; 141. A conservative estimate that slightly underestimated the real extent, see Ponting 2009), practically annulling the effect of the nominal rise in soldiers' wages. As a consequence, the economy seems to have grown faster than the costs of the army. The last line allows us to see that even if we believe the Roman army to have expanded more than indicated by the number of legions, say by some 30%, the increase in expenses would still, in relative terms, have been less or just equal to the growth of the overall economy. In short, as the expenditure on the army was by far the most important post on the imperial budget, the share of the imperial economy claimed by the government most likely fell. Alternatively, as contemplated by Scheidel (2009b, 60–61), the relative weight of the army in the imperial budget would have dropped in relation to "civilian" expenditures. But there are limits to this alternative option. With such a large standing army, even moderately expanding, it seems unlikely that its share of the budget would have been significantly reduced. Why the need to debase the coinage, if a larger buffer of nonmilitary expenditure had been available to help out a cash-strapped government? Two further considerations add strength to our hypothesis. The assumption of an economy only growing in tandem with the population would by many be considered rather conservative. A group of economic historians (e.g., Lo Cascio and Jongman in Scheidel, Morris, and Saller 2007) are inclined to argue that the Roman empire experienced real per capita growth in this period thus making the aggregate economy even bigger than envisaged here and the share commanded by the state correspondingly less. Finally, only government debasement of the coinage has been included in the model. But to this should very probably be added a moderate general inflation, which again would work toward hollowing out the effects of increased nominal military expenditures.

(p. 446) A first sign of the tightening fiscal situation may be found in the expansion of the equestrian section of the imperial service that begins in the second half of the second century. By increasing the number of procuratorial positions, government seems to have attempted to strengthen its hold on tax resources (Eich 2005). But as yet the move to administrative reform was modest. Marcus Aurelius could still aspire to keep taxes stable while trying to make ends meet by auctioning off items from the massive and ever-

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

accumulating palace collections of art works, delicate craftsmanship, and precious materials (Cassius Dio 72.32.3 and fragment in Zonaras 12.1). But the Antonine dynasty was living on borrowed time. When in 192 CE his son and successor Commodus fell victim to one of the nervous conspiracies endemic to life at court, the coffers were practically empty. The scene was set for a rerun of the civil war that had followed the collapse of the Julio-Claudians. This time, however, the situation called for more than a parsimonious Vespasian to restore financial stability. The first to attempt to fill the void, Pertinax, a seasoned general and statesman, quickly came to a bad end. Acting the role of the economizing lord might earn an approving nod of applause from the landowners in the senate, but it did not cut much ice with the praetorian guardsmen. Upset about their financial bonus and privileges, they marched on the palace and killed the new Caesar within months of his accession (Cassius Dio 74.1–10; Herodian 2.4–5). While the mutinous praetorians went on to auction off the throne to the highest bidder in Rome, it was now time for the provincial armies and their generals to join the fray. It would be four years before Septimius Severus had done away with both his rivals and placed himself securely on the throne. To consolidate his position and earn glory for his new dynasty, the restless emperor immediately turned to war, first in the east, against Parthia, and then, after a brief respite, on the northern frontier of the province of Britannia. In 211 CE, the emperor died saturated with honor at York (A. R. Birley 1988).

“Parthicus Maximus, Britannicus Maximus,” the ever-expanding Severan name bore witness to many a military triumph (Dessau 1892–1916, no. 437). But the boast of unsurpassed glories belied the feeble supports of their monarchy. The solidity of the Augustan principate was not easily restored, far from it. The silver coinage is our best index. Debasement now accelerated. The continuing effects of the plague were compounded by the demands of civil and then external war. To the problem of a marginally shrinking tax-base was added the challenge of financing increased military mobilization. Under Severus, the army broke through the previous ceiling and reached thirty-three legions (Dessau 1892–1916, no. 2288). Fiscally the imperial monarchy was beginning to lose the stability that had enabled Augustus to tame the army (Wolters 1999, 227, 234). But with increasing difficulties of funding, the dormant tiger awoke from its slumber to assert its interests, and this time not just for a brief moment. Complaints over the undisciplined soldiers and their constant clamoring for pay and bonuses have branded this era for posterity. On top of all this, these developments took place at a moment when more than a century of integration had swollen the flow of provincials into the Rome-based aristocracy so that they made up a very significant share of the imperial elite. The family of Septimius (p. 447) Severus himself hailed from Lepcis Magna in present-day Libya. But in times of conflict, the composite cosmopolitanism of the imperial aristocracy and officer corps would now itself become a potential cause of division. Italy had long since ceased to be the main source of recruits for the army and increasingly this was also true of its contribution to the imperial elite (Forni 1953; Hammond 1957). Rivalry for the throne might therefore see the opposing contenders serve as crystallization points around which regional factions took shape. Hostility between Caracalla and Geta, the heirs of Septimius Severus, gave rise to speculations that they planned to carve up the empire

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

between them. Geta would then transfer to the eastern part of the realm and form a new senate there on the basis of the leading non-European members of the aristocracy (Herodian 4.3.4–7). There was to be no amiable split, though. Caracalla preempted any such talk by assassinating his younger brother. But the benefits for him were temporary. A few years later he, too, fell by the dagger while the dynasty managed to stagger on till 235 CE. However, when its last incumbent, the young Severus Alexander and his “regent” mother, were murdered in a coup on the Rhine frontier, the forces of division were unleashed and the empire plunged into a chaotic and prolonged civil war.

During the next fifty years, the Roman world would witness a barrage of rival bids for the imperial purple. From every corner of the empire, aristocratic governors and generals queued up to throw their hat in the ring and march against their opponents (narrative in Bowman, Garnsey, and Cameron 2005). Few were successful for any length of time; even fewer were able to conquer the empire entirely. For most of these years of crisis and confusion, the imperial government was carved up into a number of shifting regional entities. Many of the details are lost to the historian; the surviving sources are pitifully meager. Through the mist, however, we dimly perceive the contours of a Gallo-Britannic empire as well as an eastern empire under the leadership of Palmyrene nobles and the fabled Queen Zenobia (Drinkwater 1987; Hartmann 2001). Some have detected in this regional drift the rise of proto-nationalist forces. But that is wide off the mark.

Nevertheless, an instructive parallel does lie with the situation in Europe in the sixteenth century. Under Habsburg Charles V, a pan-European entity seemed to be taking shape, based on his possession of the two Spanish kingdoms, the Netherlands, Austria, and vast tracts of Italy. As fiscal pressures were mounting from the soaring costs of warfare, it became increasingly difficult to keep this conglomerate inheritance united. Government, trying to mobilize more resources from society, was being pulled closer to the subjects. When Charles abdicated toward the end of his life, he had to accept the division of his dominions into an Austrian and a Spanish branch, the latter under his son, the former continuing under the rule of his brother, Ferdinand, who had previously *de facto* governed this part of the Habsburg territories in the name of Charles (Kennedy 1988, chap. 2; cf. Bang 2011b).

Similar pressures are manifest in the third-century crisis of the Roman empire (Van Dam 1985, 7–56; Brown 1992, 11; Peachin 1996) and may be analyzed in connection with the rebellion staged from the province of Africa (roughly modern Tunisia and western Libya) against Maximinus Thrax in 238 (Herodian 7.4–6, (p. 448) 11.3–5; Hilali 2007). Triggered by what was perceived as the excessive zeal of the imperial procurator in his collection of revenue for the *fiscus*, the local aristocracy rose up in force against the “tyrannical” regime of the despot. Instead they turned to the governor of the province. Long since consul, the venerable and aging Gordianus was proclaimed new emperor and placed ahead of the revolt together with his consular son by the restive provincial landowners. According to the contemporary historian Herodian, the two unwilling Gordiani had the imperial dignity more or less pressed upon them. But this is hardly credible. Within days of the proclamation, the senate in Rome came out to denounce Maximinus, still in winter quarters with his army in Sirmium, and declare for the rebellious father and son. A fair

degree of planning and alliance-making must have preceded these actions; and the ground may well have been prepared by the high-ranking members of the African cohort in the senate that seem to have taken a prominent role in events in the capital. Fiscal conflict prompting regional groups to assert stronger control of government: the early-modern ingredients are all there. But while the regional base is unmistakable, it is nevertheless significant that the rebellion marked an attempt to take over the empire lock, stock, and barrel. Behind the various regional entities that achieved some durability during this phase, it is difficult to discern any robust secessionist drive. Their rulers presented themselves within a Roman imperial framework and did not develop a strong regional political identity as an alternative (Millar 1993, 167–173, 334–336). Provinces normally had assemblies where interests in common were discussed with the Roman governor. But generally, they do not seem to have been strong enough to present distant government with a cohesive regional challenge as so often faced early-modern European rulers in the form of parliaments (Deininger 1965).

The attempt of the African Gordiani to reach out for the throne, however, was quickly nipped in the bud; they and their coalition had failed to secure control of a sizable contingent of the imperial army. Instead, the commander still loyal to Maximinus moved in with his legion from neighboring Numidia and defeated their rickety militia within the month. Military competition was both fierce and intense, and it was strongest inside the empire. A fair amount of foreign disasters added to the tragedy of civil war. Two emperors were lost in disastrous campaigns against the new Sassanian rulers of Persia. But by far the biggest threat to any imperial incumbent was his rival contenders. To stand a chance, aspiring dynasts and their supporting coalitions had to do their best to mobilize men and resources (Shaw 1999). The old fiscal bargain between government and landowners had to be renegotiated in spite of resistance. Constantly warring emperors invariably found themselves desperately short of cash, and the imperial silver coinage experienced a collapse in its precious metal contents (Walker 1976–1978, vol. 3, 127–138; Howgego 1995, 136–140; Verboven 2007). For survival, reform was inescapable. Therefore, the third-century crisis became much more than a simple period of disintegration and institutional collapse. Roman statecraft continued to penetrate society ever more deeply. In Egypt, for instance, it is during the third century that cities receive charters and councils on the Greco-Roman model (Gelzer 1909; Bowman 1971). As in (p. 449) the final decades of the republic, armed conflict among rival generals set in motion a new process of state formation (Eich 2005, chap. 10).

Of the improvisation and experiment that emperors or usurpers in cutthroat competition with each other resorted to in order to mobilize resources we know relatively little. Copious documentation was not a major concern of regimes that had to think of survival first. But when the dust begins to settle in the last quarter of the century, the innovations and solutions that enabled a number of rulers successfully to concentrate power in their hands, and reconsolidate imperial government, become visible. It was a significantly modified state-edifice which the reunification under rulers such as Aurelian (r. 270–276 CE), Diocletian (r. 284–305 CE), and Constantine (r. 306–337 CE) progressively brought about (Barnes 1982; Corcoran 1996). First of all, the governmental organization and

administrative apparatus had been enormously expanded. The few hundred aristocratic administrators, assisted by a few thousand slaves, that had sufficed during the principate was multiplied perhaps by an order of magnitude to reach 30,000 to 35,000 (Jones 1964, 1057; MacMullen 1988, 144–145). Secondly, it was a development very much of the provinces. Rome had effectively ceased to be the seat of government and the old senatorial aristocracy had lost ground. Even in Italy, ruling emperors withdrew from the ancient city on the Tiber to set up court in Milan and later Ravenna. A new and much enlarged elite was taking shape on the basis of the military and equestrian branch of the emperor's administration. Into this fast-growing cadre rose many of the prominent families that had previously dominated the councils of the many cities of the empire (Whittow 1990). The provincial takeover of the Roman world was capped, first when Diocletian revoked the freedom from land taxes that Italy had enjoyed as the privilege of victory since the end of the third Macedonian war in 167 BCE (Jones 1964, 64–65); and finally when Constantine founded a new splendid seat of government for himself on the Bosphorus. Government was becoming much more of a presence in imperial society and, for better or worse, was moving closer to the subjects (Brown 1992, 11). But as the early-modern comparison leads us to expect, more intrusive rule also made it more difficult for government to remain united in one person. The story of how Diocletian was able to stabilize the empire under his rule is instructive. From his accession in 284 CE, he steadily worked during the next decades on taking out his many rivals. But to do that, he effectively found, step by step, that he had to appoint colleagues to lead armies against opponents. When victorious the colleague would then set up a friendly court in place of that of the defeated foe. In this way, Diocletian ended up with a system of four allied rulers, each governing their own section of the empire, but with himself as the acknowledged senior. This so-called tetrarchic arrangement did not last beyond the moment its creator chose to abdicate in 305 CE. The inbuilt potential for rivalry, and the power of the hereditary principle of succession, were too strong. Nevertheless, it would only be for brief interludes that any of the following emperors were able to establish sole rule. The norm in the fourth and fifth centuries CE was that the empire would be divided between several rulers, in concert or in conflict.

(p. 450) Late Antiquity

This late antique reconsolidation of Roman military hegemony used to be thought of as a state system in terminal decline. But that is the result of a perspective too narrowly focused on the northwestern part of the empire where the fifth century saw the disintegration of the imperial government and the rise of barbarian kingdoms (see chapter 17). In the east, however, the reformed imperial state of Diocletian and Constantine proved more than durable. It lasted till the Arab conquests of the 630s (see chapters 16 and 18) or basically as long again as the previous years of the imperial monarchy. From a state formation perspective, the government that came out on the other side of the third-century crisis was more ambitious in scope; its organizational

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

capacity had increased across the board. The fiscal expression of the imperial revival was a new currency-system solidly based on a novel and stable gold “standard.” The former silver coinage, now essentially a base metal issue, continued to be struck in bewildering and, for a while, inflationary variety. But the new gold coins provided a firm medium through which government would receive many of its taxes (Banaji 2001).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 15.2 The Roman Empire in the Early Fourth Century CE. After map in M. T. Boatwright, D. J. Gargola, N. Lenski, R. J. A. Talbert, *The Romans: From village to empire. A history of Rome from earliest times to the end of the western empire*, 2nd ed. OUP 2012.

Striving to hold on to and mobilize resources, government rewrote the administrative geography of the empire (Jones 1964, 51–52, chaps. 12, 13, 16). The large provinces of the old order were carved up and divided into smaller and more easily managed territories (see map. 15.2). In total, the number of provincial units just about doubled, from the forty to fifty of the principate to

approximately one hundred (Barnes 1982, 201–225), while appointed governors found at their service a larger and permanent office staff. Instead of the very lean arrangements of the previous period, they now had available an *officium* for which the norm seems to have been 100 members. At the same time, governors were divested of their traditional military command of the troops garrisoned in their province. For these a separate set of officers now existed while the governor concentrated on dispensing justice and overseeing the collection of taxes (Slootjes 2006). Denser management of provincial society developed in tandem with a more elaborate administrative hierarchy. An extra layer was introduced with the bundling of the provinces into twelve larger regional districts, so-called *dioceses* headed by a *vicarius*. Attached to the various courts of the several co-regents, a series of central bureaus shot up to handle imperial finances and legal matters (Kelly 1994; 2004). From the turn of the second century, Roman jurisprudence, which under the principate to a large extent had been elaborated by the scholarly commentaries produced by learned aristocrats, increasingly became a part of the formal state apparatus. The volume of transactions and written information handled at all levels of imperial administration increased, right down to registration of prices of primary agricultural products current in provincial cities to be used for commuting taxes owed in kind into monetary obligations (Rea 1984, nos. 3624–26, 3628–36). The result was far from always smooth and efficient. Overwhelmed by the mass of material, emperors even found it necessary occasionally to issue caveats and blanket cancellations (p. 451) (p. 452) of and against whole categories of orders and decisions issued under their signature (Jones 1964, 410). The administration remained traditional and

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

patrimonial in style, but nevertheless represented an advance on the capacity of the previous period (Garnsey and Humfress 2001, chap. 3).

The fiscal organization of the empire saw significant change (Jones 1964, chap. 13; Cerati 1975; Wickham 2005, 56–80). The new administration regularized the ad hoc exactions habitually demanded of their subjects by the cash-strapped emperors of the crisis period. The result would be the first attempt to govern on the basis of a state budget from which the year's tax requirements, many of them stated in kind, were then calculated and in a complex formula divided around the provinces and communities of the empire. In many regions, taxes probably remained customary to a large extent, but greater flexibility was certainly introduced in the way the imperial tribute was set according to annual need through the so-called indiction, complemented if necessary by superindictions (Jones 1964, 449). No less manifest a sign of the expanded administrative capacity of the new imperial dispensation appears in the field of law-making and adjudication (Harries 1999; Humfress 2007). With the multiplication of the number of provinces and therefore governors, there would have been more Roman courts available around the empire. The imperial state also offered more assistance in enforcing its judicial rulings. The governmental style of the emperors still depended on subjects coming to them, but the number of laws and constitutions promulgated in response multiplied (Millar 2006; Schmidt-Hofner 2008). Imperial jurists tackled this development by compiling into two great corpora imperial laws, judicial rulings, and legal commentaries systematically organized according to topic. The codification of Roman law in the Theodosian Code of 438 CE and the *Corpus Juris Civilis* of 529 CE was a crowning achievement of the late Roman monarchy based at Constantinople. Justified by topical concerns about the decline of morals and the corruption of the legal profession, a credulous posterity swallowed these clichés and misread the law codes as products of a degenerate state (Matthews 2000).

During the years of crisis and division insecure emperors went searching for methods to shore up their desperately shaky legitimacy. Concord and unity were to be reinforced, their rule naturalized. The result was a more intrusive religious policy, at first based on an enhanced sense of the emperor's divinity: Sol, Jupiter, Hercules (Webb 1927, 271–272, nos. 54, 61–67, 301, nos. 319–22; Dessau 1892–1916, no. 634; Fowden 2005, 553–561). Greater demands were made on the loyalties of wider groups of subjects. It was these more ambitious religious policies which for brief periods spawned the active and infamous persecution of Christians by the Roman authorities in the second half of the third and the first years of the fourth century. Ironically, it was the very same “ecumenical” impulse that eventually would elevate the much-maligned sect to favored status (Rives 1999). The decisive step was taken under Constantine when he became convinced that the Christian God stood behind his attempt to win the empire to himself. The new creed did not tolerate imperial divinity, though. But Constantine and his successors would settle for less. Presenting the emperor as a thirteenth apostle or God's anointed was quite (p. 453) “august” enough when the world would go on to refer to the palace as “divine” and imperial commands as “sacred” (Barnes 1981, 259; further MacCormack 1981). For monotheism offered other advantages; it presented an image of

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

the cosmos as the product of one, indivisible supreme force, just as empire and world ought to be governed by one sole power; and it was supported by a set of “codified” teachings fixed in writing and with universalist aspirations. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the peoples” (Matthew 28.19), the mission command was an ambition that spoke well to emperors that claimed to unite the world under their command. Christian and imperial universalism drew water from the same well (Fowden 1993).

Barely had Constantine defeated his last imperial adversary before he threw himself behind an attempt to firm up the institutional unity of the manifold Christian congregations in the empire. At the first so-called ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 CE, the Roman kosmokrator presided over a meeting of Christian bishops assembled to agree on a simple and uniform creed to serve as the future foundation for the universal church (Barnes 1981; Ayers 2004). In the event, the attempt to settle on a fixed formula to firm up Christian identity ignited endless theological controversies and drew tenacious opposition from those that felt excluded. The venomous accusation of heresy was thrown liberally at opponents in the hope, not only of calling down the wrath of divine power, but also making them feel the heavy hand of the state. Adhering to the wrong kind of Christian doctrine would now also be a matter of law and the courts (Humfress 2007). But even if state-involvement bred fanatical conflict and schism, it most of all facilitated the growth of the Catholic Church into a rich and powerful organization. Under imperial tutelage, the church of the bishops fast accumulated wealth and became one of the biggest landowners in the empire (Jones 1964, 894–910). The alliance with the imperial monarchy enabled the clergy to speak with weight and persuasion within the cultural ecumene of the Roman world. Theologians worked busily on how to combine parts of “pagan” high culture with the new canon based on the Bible. Viable compromises were formulated even as “heathen” idols were exorcised. Soon members of the urban elites began to reorient themselves toward the new models of life and comportment emanating from the courts. It was to be a long period of transition. So-called pagan culture did not vanish overnight, and much of it was absorbed by the new cultural paradigm. But already under Theodosius the Great, the last emperor briefly to unite all parts of the empire under his hand, the Church had gained enough strength to set the ruler straight, in public. In 380 the Catholic Church was raised to a position as the official religion of the empire. The ecumene was broadening; the simple tenets of the new faith and its more inclusive congregational life served as a vehicle of cultural integration (Brown 1995, 2001).

Fiscal administration, law, and religious policy: in all these spheres the late antique process of Roman state formation generated innovation and creative response to master the problems and pressures that had undermined the stability of the Augustan principate. It is, however, disputed whether this buildup of civilian organizational capacity enabled Roman government to expand its military resources. The Christian bishop Lactantius accused Diocletian, in an inflammatory (p. 454) pamphlet, of having more than quadrupled the army. Each of the tetrarchs “sought to have a far greater number of soldiers than previous emperors had when they governed the state single-handedly” (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 7.2). Such wildly inflated claims deserve little respect. Agitated

and vindictive, they belong to the realm of rhetorical construction and scandalizing exaggeration made to stigmatize the recently departed emperor as a capricious despot. Nevertheless, the claim does not toward a central logic of the late antique state. More courts did not only multiply the number of military establishments but also each emperor would remain under pressure to keep up or even increase the numbers of his army, at the very least as a precautionary measure directed against his notional colleagues, but often de facto rivals (Shaw 1999). Two other figures are reported in sixth-century sources. One states the size of the entire army, including the navy, to have been 435,266 under Diocletian; the other gives a total figure of 645,000 in some unspecified past. Neither figure inspires much confidence. But in his magisterial survey of the *Later Roman empire*, A. H. M. Jones accepted these as coordinates charting a growth of the Roman military during the fourth century (Jones 1964, 679–686; Elton 2007, 284–286). The larger figure he thought compatible with a document, known as the *notitia dignitatum*, listing the offices and military contingents of the empire by the turn of the fifth century. Extrapolating from the number of units on the basis of presumed regimental strength, he arrived at a comparable figure.

But there is one serious problem with both estimates. There is a wide discrepancy between these very high figures for the size of the late Roman army and the far more modest numbers that emperors are known to have been able to take out on campaign. Jones sought to answer this problem by a general observation that no army could ever bring all men into the field. Many were needed on garrison duty and such. In this case, however, the argument seems weak; it is a simple question of logic. The estimated size of the number of soldiers kept under weapons is extraordinarily large in historical perspective, while the concentrations of soldiers brought to the field are much closer to the normal historical range (see Table 15.3). Why would we credit the Roman state with unusual capacity in funding and maintaining an inordinately sized professional standing army when it would seem that it must then have been less efficient than many others in bringing it into the field? MacMullen, another luminary in the study of the late Roman world, therefore drew the opposite conclusion, that the later imperial army was a “paper tiger” and the state-edifice fundamentally corrupt and sick to the bone (MacMullen 1988, 171–197). But that view is equally unsatisfactory; it ignores the fact that the eastern part of the empire, governed from Constantinople, stood firm as the western court collapsed during the fifth century.

Much of the problem disappears if the inflated and greatly uncertain figures for the later Roman army are abandoned as the basis of analysis (cf. Tomlin 2008). Little would suggest that the Roman empire ever enjoyed such a superabundance of troops as particularly the larger of Jones’s estimates seems to imply. When at the beginning of the fifth century, the western government alone was supposed to have had access to some 300,000 men, the impression is rather of a government (p. 455) struggling and having to call in supports from the farthest corners of its provinces to meet the challenge of what in comparison would have been a rather modest warband of wayward Gothic, formerly allied soldiers trying to blackmail the court in Italy (Ward-Perkins 2005, 40–46; further Heather 1991). The riddle, however, becomes more manageable when the more conservative

The Roman Empire IIThe Monarchy

estimate for the army of the principate, arrived at above, is adopted as a baseline for our speculations. This would still permit us to believe that the intensified efforts and stronger competitive pressures of the late antique state apparatus resulted in a marginal increase of manpower, without committing us to unrealistic levels of military mobilization, pushing perhaps the grand total for the whole empire into the 300,000 to 400,000 range (cf. Eich 2005, 365n6).

Table 15.3. Army Totals and Battle Strengths, Late Roman and Early Modern

Army, Year	Army Total	Troops Brought to Battle
Schweden 1632	183,000	20,000 (Lutzen)
Holy Roman Emperor, 1632	101,000	18,000 (Lutzen)
Spanish Army Flanders	77,000	43,000 (available for offensive operations)
Late Roman Army	400,000–600,000?	13,000 (Strasbourg 357 CE)
Late Roman Eastern Empire	300,000?	20,000 (531 CE)

Note: Based on Parker 1988, 40–41; Elton 2007, 285): Battle strength is normally well below total numbers in organized armies. At all times, large sections of an army can be expected to be occupied on garrison duty and patrolling and the mobile part often scattered across several theaters of war. The number of soldiers that late Roman emperors were able to bring to battle was of the same order of magnitude as the leading contenders during the Thirty Years War. This may well reflect the basic logistical constraints of preindustrial conditions. Even so, it is noticeable that the much larger numbers hypothesized for the late Roman army did not translate into a markedly higher rate for battle strength. When, moreover, we take account of the intensity of fighting during the Thirty Years War, it seems all the more remarkable that the western court should have found it necessary to denude the Rhine frontier to gather troops in a field army of such size in order to counter the invasion by Germanic troops in the early fifth century. Either the late Roman army was significantly less efficient than the armies of the early seventeenth century or its numbers have been estimated unrealistically high.

The pressures that spawned reforms to build up the organizational muscle of imperial government were twofold. The military demands of the third century increased the need for state expenditure; but a tighter revenue situation had also made it more challenging

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

for the empire to keep up its incomes. While recurrent visitations of the Antonine plague squeezed the economy, the claims of increasingly strong aristocratic elites competed with the tributary demands of the emperors. Simply to maintain the established level of state activity required greater effort. There was a limit to how much the imperial government could expand its military capacity. With the advent of the fourth century, however, one of these brakes lost force; the pandemic had run its course and the population was on the way to recovery. But not so the other one: provincial elites had emerged even stronger on the other side of the crisis; and they expected to be rewarded liberally for their support.

(p. 456) It was the richest and most powerful segments of provincial society that would staff the enormously expanded imperial service (Whittow 1990; further on local elites Lepelley 1983; Delmaire 1996; Schmidt-Hofner 2011).

The fundamental work of Weber has taught generations of sociologists and historians to think of aristocracy and (modern) bureaucracy as opposing terms, embodying a confrontation between personal privilege and impersonal regularity. Few have paid much attention to Weber's observation that the ambition of modern bureaucracies to operate according to impersonal rules and routine regulations developed on the basis of the ability of social elites to curb monarchical discretion by consolidating their privileges (Weber 1972, 584–585, 594–606, 827–828, 834–835). Historically, high bureaucratic office did not necessarily develop separately from aristocratic rank. Quite the reverse, at court aristocrats were able to lay claim to positions that would otherwise have had to be filled by the emperor's domestics (cf. Millar 1977, 69–110). Such offices were relatively unimportant to the landowning aristocracy of the European Middle Ages where states or rather monarchs commanded fewer resources. But feudalism does not necessarily represent the historical norm. In the ancient Mediterranean, office-holding within city-states, and increasingly so within imperial governments, was an important source of aristocratic social power. Offices were treated as prebends: they were supposed to return a (significant) profit for the holders, were readily used as a source of patronage, and conferred rank. Pay-scales in the later Roman governmental apparatus were fixed on the premise that incumbents would remunerate themselves when dealing with the subject population (Veyne 1981; MacMullen 1988, 122–170; Kelly 2004). Positions in the imperial service had great purchase in elite patronage networks while the huge expansion in numbers saw the formation for the first time of a truly empire-wide hierarchy of aristocratic ranks, as many of the locally leading families in the cities of the empire took their chance to move further up in the world graced with imperial instead of urban distinctions. Rank and honors here might be as important as actual office. More sought these positions than could be accommodated within the administration. Hence developed the phenomenon of *supernumerarii* where men of some substance were able to claim the title without the office, and with the title power and distinction (Banaji 2001, chap. 6; Sarris 2006, chap. 5).

This newly formed, empire-wide aristocracy was able to carve out for itself a very large part of the imperial pie. Rewards, privileges, and immunities galore helped it to accumulate and amass great concentrations of wealth and landed property. Compared with the principate, the imperial aristocracy seems steadily to have become even richer

(Hopkins 2000, 255). This was the price the ruler had to accept for the opportunity to intensify the extraction of tribute from the subject population. Tightening the hold on the production surplus could only happen through increasing empowerment of the elites. In negotiations with government, groups of provincial landowners were able to wring more rights and concessions out of imperial authorities in return for collecting the taxes from the tenant peasantry. Characteristic is a response issued under Theodosius granting to the landowners (p. 457) of the province of Palestine that just as in a number of other provinces, they should now also receive the advantage that it would be illegal for their tenants to abandon their estates (Codex Justinianus 11.51.1). From the perspective of the court, such rulings served a fiscal purpose; they were a means to ensure that there would be producers on the estates to defray the imperial tribute (Grey 2007). To the landowners, such legal concessions were a helpful addition to the store of instruments that allowed them to put pressure on the peasantry when negotiating the terms of tenure (Wickham 2005, 523–525). Higher rates of extraction bred a group of more powerful and influential landowners whose interests the imperial government was unable to trump.

The attempt to tap more vigorously into the wealth of the agricultural economy thus quickly ran up against a barrier. In this respect, the late Roman world much resembles the two main imperial rivals of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean: the Ottomans and the Spanish Habsburgs. As the military revolution continued unabated into the seventeenth century, the attempts to keep pace with the continuously rising costs of warfare forced both regimes to bow to landed aristocratic interests. The result was the accumulation of property and bundles of rights in the hands of big and powerful provincial aristocrats who were often able to elude further governmental control (Glete 2002, 22–23, 120–136). In Ottoman history, the rise of the so-called ayans used to signal the onset of decline. This view is now largely abandoned (Khoury 1997; Tezcan 2010). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Ottoman empire was far from a dying state. From most perspectives, it was a healthy and durable edifice, but it was gradually losing the edge in the arms race that it had enjoyed during the sixteenth century when new conquests made the Sultanic coffers overflow with the rich spoils of empire. But as the flurry of expansion petered out, it was unable to intensify the mobilization of resources as fast as its most successful rivals, though it remained a powerful imperial state (Ágoston 2005, 201–202).

The late Roman imperial state, too, nourished its great aristocratic households enabling them to amass extensive portfolios of lands and public functions; some of them even turned to warlordism. Generally, however, the great “houses” did not threaten the functioning of the state system; they relied as much on access to the patronage of imperial government as it did on their collaboration. The two were intertwined and mutually dependent (Matthews 1975; Gasco 1985; Banaji 2001, chaps. 4–6; Liebeschuetz 2001, chap. 5; Weisweiler 2011). Yet the greater control these households came to enjoy over the agricultural base of the empire did significantly circumscribe the potential of the

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Roman government to increase the extraction of resources and build up capacity (Sarris 2006; Bransbourg 2008; 2009).

A good illustration may be offered by the introduction of the so-called recruits' gold. This was a tax paid in gold by landowners instead of supplying peasants for the imperial army. The arrangement allowed the elite to hold on to much valued producers serving on its estates while the government got cash in hand to pay for mercenaries. Cheap and abundant supplies of recruits could be readily found among the scatter of volatile tribes living along the distant, permeable frontiers of (p. 458) the empire (Ammianus Marcellinus 31.4.4; *Codex Theodosianus* 7.13.2; Jones 1964, 432). These marcher areas, particularly those on the Germanic frontier, became an increasingly important source of soldiers for the Roman military during the fourth century. Recruiting soldiers from tribal frontiers is a time-tested imperial strategy (Gellner 1981, chap. 1). Such "barbarians" have often enough been employed with great effect; and so they were in the Roman case. When the century drew to its close, a man of Vandal descent had risen to the highest command in the army. Even so, it is also a strategy that carried risks. The tribes on the imperial frontier were not merely convenient allies, they were also potential enemies. With relatively undifferentiated economies, much of their male population could be called up into military service, and plunder might be an important secondary source of income. Normally this type of threat could be contained because tribal communities lacked mass organization. But long interaction with and direct experience of Roman military life changed that; it firmed up the organizational capacity of the "barbarian" tribes (Whittaker 1994; Shaw 1999). When this happened, they might band together into larger coalitions. Time and again in history, governments of complex agrarian societies were faced with formidable challenges mounted from the margins of their worlds by concentrations of such warbands (Lattimore 1951; De Cosmo 2004). Usually, however, even these proved to be brittle and short-lived. The power of the Huns who under Attila struck terror into the hearts of Roman imperial society in the middle of the fifth century evaporated quickly in the years following his death. But some of the bands of Germanic soldiers, intermittently serving the imperial court in Italy, managed to establish more enduring entities. This happened when they began to build alliances with parts of the Roman landowning elite.

The employment of "federated" Germanic warbands in the army exercised a pull on the tribes of the frontier region and drew them into the empire. In return for service to the Roman rulers, their leaders aspired to receive lands in the provinces on which to settle and extract revenue. Again, meeting such aspirations was nothing new. But the scale was different and by the beginning of the fifth century, it became a problem particularly to the court that controlled the western part of the empire. Ceding lands to the direct control of auxiliary soldiers and their leaders might see them become more or less autonomous. Rulers of later Muslim empires often granted lands and revenues from which particularly their cavalries were supposed to maintain themselves. But they always tried to retain control of the land by insisting on the right periodically to reshuffle these allocations (Habib 1999, 298-341; Inalcik 1994, 114-117; Gommans 2002, 81-88). In the Roman case, this did not happen and thereby the crucial nexus between imperial government

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

and parts of the army began to crumble. The Germanic soldiers had ceased to depend on central government for their basic maintenance. On the contrary, they vigorously set about expanding the areas originally ceded to them by the threat of further violence and raids against neighboring districts. Some Roman landowners lost their properties in this process while others managed to strike a deal with the new military power. This alliance became the basis for the formation of a number of Germano-Roman kingdoms that gradually hollowed out the western parts of (p. 459) the empire from within till the imperial dignity was finally abandoned in 476 CE in the west and the laurels returned to Constantinople from where the empire would last another century and a half (Wood, chapter 17 below).

In a state formation perspective, the process may be understood as one in which central government lost its near monopoly on the sale of protection and found itself priced out of the market. The new Germanic lords could not offer the same extensive administration to the landowners, but they did something else: they provided cheaper protection. Much of their military costs were paid for directly out of the lands they controlled and taxation gradually withered away (Wickham 2005, 80–124). From the European experience, historians are wont to expect that states build up capacity in return for offering more elaborate services to the taxpaying subjects. Here this process was put in reverse or rolled back. The Germanic successor kingdoms offered fewer services, maintaining a less elaborate administrative and judicial apparatus, but also significantly slashed the price of protection. This began to look like an acceptable deal to sections of the Roman aristocracy in the Latin parts of the empire during the fifth century (Wickham 1984). It has often been remarked that the armies of the western court were more often than not victorious in battle. The problem was rather that for long periods they failed to show. The court was simply unable to put them into the field to the extent that it was necessary to meet the challenges of the time. In that situation, the western emperor was gradually abandoned.

At first, when problems appeared on the horizon, they sparked the usual spate of rebellious generals trying to exploit the weakness of the court to make an alternative bid for the imperial purple. Concentrating on defeating these more immediate threats, the western government then found that the Germanic problem was slipping out of control. During the first half of the fifth century, Britain was simply abandoned while incomes from large chunks of Gaul, Spain, and North Africa were lost to groups of Germanic federates: Ostro- and Visigoths, Franks, Burgundians, the Vandals. The western court had been caught in a vicious spiral from which it was almost impossible to escape (Ward-Perkins 2005, chaps. 3–4). The emperor was the heir to a system with heavy and extensive commitments, but his revenue base suffered continuous erosion and made it increasingly difficult to restore the military resources of the government. Funds always fell short of needs. When Africa, with its rich revenue and copious grain supplies, fell to the Vandals during the 430s the game was effectively up; the situation had become irreversible (Wickham 2005, 87–88). Over the next few decades, the western court wasted away. By contrast, the other seat of imperial power, Constantinople, remained stable. It was even occasionally able to lend its poor western relation a helping hand. The eastern,

Hellenic, part of the empire had always been the most affluent and late antiquity saw the agricultural economy flourish in many regions (Bang 2007). The fiscal basis, in short, was stronger. To this came the unexpected, and unwanted, boon of the collapse of the western parts of the empire. From a military perspective, the successor kingdoms represented much less of a direct threat than a strong twin, potentially rival, imperial court with copious forces at its command. When Constantinople at the same (p. 460) time managed to establish a *modus vivendi* with the Sasanid rulers of Persia, the two old empires of the classical world stood to enjoy another period of respite where they could benefit from lessening military pressures and reconsolidated imperial hegemonies before a new revolutionary creed and fighting force would emerge out of the Arabian desert to transcend them both (Howard-Johnston 2010, 488–530). In the meantime, however, the Greek Romans would last long enough to launch an attempt to recuperate some of the lost territories in the west. Enter Justinian (r. 527–565 CE), the restorer of Roman law (and rule).

References

- Absil, M. 1997. *Les préfets du prétoire d'Auguste à Commode*. Paris.
- Afzelius, A. 1935. *Den romerske nobilitets omfang*. Copenhagen.
- Ágoston, G. 2005. *Guns for the sultan: Military power and the weapons industry in the Ottoman empire*. Cambridge.
- Alcock, S. 1997. "Greece: A landscape of resistance?" In D. J. Mattingly, ed., *Dialogues in Roman imperialism: Power, discourse, and discrepant experience in the Roman empire*, 103–116. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Alston, R. 1995. *Soldier and society in Roman Egypt*. London.
- . 2007. "The military and politics." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 176–197. Cambridge.
- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London.
- Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial ideology and provincial loyalty in the Roman empire*. Berkeley, ca.
- Athar Ali, M. 1997. *The Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb*. Rev. ed. New Delhi.
- Ayers, L. 2004. *Nicaea and its legacy: An approach to fourth-century Trinitarian theology*. Oxford.
- Bagnall, R., and B. Frier. 1994. *The demography of Roman Egypt*. Cambridge.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Banaji, J. 2001. *Agrarian change in late antiquity: Gold, labour, and aristocratic dominance*. Oxford.

Bang, P. F. 2007. "Trade and empire—in search of organizing concepts for the Roman economy." *Past and Present* 195: 3–54.

———. 2008. *The Roman bazaar: A comparative study of trade and markets in a tributary empire*. Cambridge.

———. 2009. "Commanding and consuming the world: Empire, tribute, and trade in Roman and Chinese history." In W. Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*, 100–120. New York.

(p. 461) ———. 2010. "Imperial ecumene and polyethnicity." In A. Barchiesi and W. Scheidel, eds., *The Oxford handbook of Roman studies*, 671–684. Oxford.

———. 2011a. "Lord of all the world—the state, heterogeneous power and hegemony in the Roman and Mughal empires." In P. F. Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary empires in global history*, 171–192. Basingstoke.

———. 2011b. "The king of kings: Universal hegemony, imperial power, and a new comparative history of Rome." In J. Arnason and K. A. Raaflaub, eds., *The Roman empire in context*, 322–349. Malden, MA.

———. 2011c. "Court and state in the Roman empire—domestication and tradition in comparative perspective." In T. Artan, J. Duindam, and M. Kunt, eds., *Royal courts in dynastic states and empires: A global perspective*, 103–128. Leiden.

Bang, P. F., and C. A. Bayly, eds. 2011. *Tributary empires in global history*. Basingstoke.

Bang, P. F., and D. Kolodziejczyk, eds. 2012. *Universal empire: A comparative approach to imperial culture and representation in Eurasian history*. Cambridge.

Barkey, K. 2008. *Empire of difference: The Ottomans in comparative perspective*. Cambridge.

Barnes, T. D. 1981. *Constantine and Eusebius*. Cambridge, MA.

———. 1982. *The new empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, MA.

Bayly, C. A. 1996. *Empire and information*. Cambridge.

Beard, M., and J. Henderson. 2001. *Classical art: From Greece to Rome*. Oxford.

Beard, M., J. North, and S. Price. 1998. *Religions of Rome. Vol. 1: A history*. Cambridge.

Beranger, J. 1953. *Recherches sur l'aspect idéologique du principat*. Basel.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Berkey, J. P. 2003. *The formation of Islam: Religion and society in the Near East, 600–1800*. Cambridge.

Birley, A. R. 1981. "The economic effects of Roman frontier policy." In A. King and M. Henig, eds., *The Roman West in the third century: Contributions from archaeology and history*, 39–53. Oxford.

———. 1988. *The African emperor: Septimius Severus*. London.

———. 2007. "Making emperors: Imperial instrument or independent force." In P. Erdkamp, ed., *A companion to the Roman army*, 379–394. Malden, MA.

Birley, E. 1988. *The Roman army: Papers 1929–1986*. Amsterdam.

Bleicken, J. 1982. *Zum Regierungsstil des römischen Kaisers: Eine Antwort auf Fergus Millar*. Frankfurt.

———. 1995. *Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte des römischen Kaiserreiches*. Vol. 1. 4th ed. Paderborn.

Boulvert, G. 1970. *Esclaves et affranchis impériaux sous Haut-Empire: Rôle politique et administratif*. Naples.

Bowman, A. K. 1971. *The town councils of Roman Egypt*. Toronto.

Bowman, A. K., P. Garnsey, and A. Cameron, eds. 2005. *The Cambridge ancient history, 2nd Ed. Vol. 12, Crisis of empire, A.D. 193–337*. Cambridge.

Bowman, A. K., P. A. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone, eds. 2000. *The Cambridge ancient history, 2nd Ed. Vol. 11, The high empire, AD 70–192*. Cambridge.

Bransbourg, G. 2008. "Fiscalité impériale et finances municipales au IV^e siècle." *Antiquité tardive* 16: 255–296.

Bransbourg, G. 2009. "Julien, l'immunitas Christi, les diuex et les cités." *Antiquité tardive* 17: 151–158.

Braude, B., and B. Lewis, eds. 1982. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman empire: The functioning of a plural society*. 2 vols. New York.

Breeze, D. J., and B. Dobson. 1993. *Roman officers and frontiers*. Stuttgart. (p. 462)

Brélaz, C. 2005. *La sécurité publique en Asie Mineure sous le principat (I^{er}–III^eème s. ap. J.-C.): Institutions municipales et institutions impériales dans l'Orient romain*. Basel.

Brewer, J. 1988. *The sinews of power: War, money, and the English state, 1688–1783*. London.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Brown, P. 1992. *Power and persuasion in late antiquity: Towards a Christian empire*. Madison, WI.

———. 1995. *Authority and the sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman world*. Cambridge.

———. 2001. *Poverty and leadership in the later Roman empire*. Hanover, NH.

Brunt, P. A 1962. "The army and the land in the Roman revolution." *Journal of Roman Studies* 52: 69–86.

———. 1971. *Italian manpower, 225 B.C.–A.D. 14*. Oxford.

———. 1977. "Lex de imperio Vespasiani." *Journal of Roman Studies* 67: 95–116.

———. 1990. *Roman imperial themes*. Oxford.

Bruun, C. 2007. "The Antonine plague and the 'third-century crisis.'" In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20–24, 2006)*, 201–219. Leiden.

Burton, G. P. 1975. "Proconsuls, assizes, and the administration of justice under the empire." *Journal of Roman Studies* 65: 92–106.

———. 2002. "The regulation of inter-community relations in the provinces and the political integration of the Roman empire (27 BC–AD 238)." In V. B. Gorman and E. W. Robinson eds., *Oikistes: Studies in constitutions, colonies, and military power in the ancient world offered in honor of A. J. Graham.*, 113–128. Leiden.

Butcher, K., and M. Ponting 2005. "The Roman *denarius* under the Julio-Claudian emperors: Mints, metallurgy and technology." *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 24: 163–197.

Campanella, T. 1993. *La cité du soleil: Texte latin de l'édition de Paris, 1637 établi, traduit et commenté par Roland Crahay*. Brussels.

Campbell, J. B. 1975. "Who were the 'viri militares'?" *Journal of Roman Studies* 65: 11–31.

———. 1984. *The emperor and the Roman army 31 BC–AD 235*. Oxford.

———. 1993. "War and diplomacy: Rome and Parthia, 31 BC–AD 235," in J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and society in the Roman world*, 213–240. London.

Capogrossi Colognesi, L., and E. Tassi Scandone, eds. 2009. *La lex de imperio Vespasiani e la Roma dei Flavi*. Rome.

Cerati, A. 1975. *Caractère annonaire et assiette de l'impôt foncier au bas-empire*. Paris.

Christiansen, E. 1988. *The Roman coins of Alexandria*. 2 vols. Aarhus.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Collins, A. 2002. *Greater than emperor: Cola di Rienzo (ca. 1313–54) and the world of fourteenth-century Rome*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Corcoran, S. 1996. *The empire of the tetrarchs: Imperial pronouncements and government AD 284–324*. Oxford.

Coriat, J.-P. 1997. *Le prince législateur: La technique législative des Severes et les methodes de creation du droit imperial à la fin du principat*. Rome.

Crone, P. 1980. *Slaves on horses: The evolution of the Islamic polity*. Cambridge.

De Cosmo, N. 2004. *Ancient China and its enemies: The rise of nomadic power in East Asian history*. Cambridge.

Deininger, J. 1965. *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit: Von Augustus bis zum Ende des dritten Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* Munich.

Delmaire, R. 1996. "Cités et fiscalité au bas-empire: A propos du rôle des curiales dans la levée des impôts." In C. Lepelley, ed., *La fin de la cité antique et le début de la cité Médiévale*, 59–70. Bari. (p. 463)

Demougin, S. 1999. *L'ordre équestre: Histoire d'une aristocratie (II^e siècle av. J.-C.—III^e siècle ap. J.-C.)*. Rome.

Dessau, H. 1892–1916. *Inscriptiones latinae selectae*. 3 Vols. Berlin.

Dettenhoffer, M. H. 2009. "Eunuchs, women, and imperial courts." In W. Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*, 83–99. New York.

Devijver, H. 1976–2001. *Prosopographia militiarum equestrium quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum*. 5 vols. Leuven.

———. 1989. *The equestrian officers of the Roman imperial army*. 2 vols. Amsterdam.

———. 1999. "Les relations sociales des chevaliers romains." In S. Demougin, ed., *L'ordre équestre: Histoire d'une aristocratie (II^e siècle av. J.-C.—III^e siècle ap. J.-C.)*, 237–269. Rome.

Dignas, B. 2002. *Economy of the sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*. Oxford.

Dittenberger, W., 1903–1905. *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*. 2 vols. Leipzig.

Dmitriev, S. 2005. *City government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*. Oxford.

Drexhage, R. 1988. *Untersuchungen zum römischen Osthandel*. Bonn.

Drinkwater, J. 1987. *The Gallic empire: Separatism and continuity in the north-western provinces of the Roman empire, A.D. 260–274*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2007. "The principate—lifebelt, or millstone around the neck of the empire?" In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20–24, 2006)*, 67–74. Leiden.

Duncan-Jones, R. 1994. *Money and government in the Roman empire*. Cambridge.

Dyson, S. L. 1971. "Native revolts in the Roman empire." *Historia* 20: 239–274.

Eck, W. 1970. *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian: Prosopographische Untersuchungen mit Einschluss d. Jahres u. Provinzialfasten d. Statthalter*. Munich.

———. 1974. "Beförderungskriterien innerhalb der senatorischen Laufbahn, dargestellt an der Zeit von 69 bis 138 n.Chr." In H. Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.1, 158–228. Berlin.

———. 2000. "Part II: Government and civil administration." In A. K. Bowman, P. A. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone, eds., *The Cambridge ancient history*, 2nd ed., Vol. 11: *The high empire, AD 70–192*, 192–292. Cambridge.

Eck, W., A. C. Rufino, and F. F. Gómez. 1996. *Das senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*. Munich.

Eder, D. 1990. "Augustus and the power of tradition: The Augustan principate as binding link between republic and empire." In K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher, eds., *Between republic and empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his principate*, 71–122. Berkeley, CA.

Edwards, C. 1993. *The politics of immorality in ancient Rome*. Cambridge.

———. 2003. "Incorporating the alien: The art of conquest." In C. Edwards and G. Woolf, eds., *Rome the cosmopolis*, 44–70. Cambridge.

Eich, A. 2009. "Der Wechsel zu einer neuen grand strategy unter Augustus und seine langfristigen Folgen." *Historische Zeitschrift* 288: 561–611.

Eich, P. 2005. *Zur Metamorphose des politischen Systems in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Die Entstehung einer "personalen Bürokratie" im langen dritten Jahrhundert*. Berlin.

Eich, P., S. Schmidt-Hofner, and C. Wieland, eds. 2011. *Der wiederkehrende Leviathan: Staatlichkeit und Staatswerdung in spätantike und früher Neuzeit*. Heidelberg.

Eisenstadt, S. N. 1963. *The political systems of empires*. London. (p. 464)

Elias, N. 1969. *Die höfische Gesellschaft: Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie: Mit einer Einleitung: Soziologie und Geschichtswissenschaft*. Neuwied.

———. 1997. *Über den Prozess der Civilization*. 2 vols. Frankfurt.

Elton, H. 2007. "Military forces." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 270–309. Cambridge.

Erdkamp, P. 2005. *The grain market in the Roman empire*. Cambridge.

———. 2006. "Army and society." In N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx, eds., *A companion to the Roman republic*, 278–296. Malden, MA.

———., ed. 2007. *A companion to the Roman army*. Malden, MA.

Fink, R. O. 1971. *Roman military records on papyrus*. Cleveland, OH.

Flaig, E. 1992. *Den Kaiser herausfordern: Die Usurpation im römischen Reich*. Frankfurt.

———. 2011. "The transition from republic to principate." In J. Arnason and K. A. Raaflaub, eds., *The Roman empire in context*, 67–84. Malden, MA.

Frier, B. 2000. "Demography." In A. K. Bowman, P. A. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone, eds., *The Cambridge ancient history*, vol. 11: *The high empire, AD 70–192*, 2nd ed., 878–816. Cambridge.

Friesen, S. J. 1993. *Twice neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the cult of the Flavian imperial family*. Leiden.

Forni, G. 1953. *Il reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano*. Rome.

Fowden, G. 1993. *Empire to commonwealth: Consequences of monotheism in late antiquity*. Princeton, NJ.

———. 2005. "Late polytheism. Public religion." In A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and Averil Cameron, eds., *The Cambridge history*, vol. 12: *The crisis of empire, A.D. 193–337*, 553–572. Cambridge.

Gabba, E. 1976. *Republican Rome, the army and the allies*. Oxford.

Galinsky, K., ed. 2005. *The Cambridge companion to the age of Augustus*. Cambridge.

Galsterer, H. 2000. "Local and provincial institutions of government." In A. K. Bowman, P. A. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone, eds., *The Cambridge ancient history*, vol. 11: *The high empire, AD 70–192*, 344–360. Cambridge.

Garnsey, P. 1988. *Famine and food supply in the Graeco-Roman world: Responses to risk and crisis*. Cambridge.

Garnsey, P., and C. Humfress. 2001. *The evolution of the late antique world*. Cambridge.

Garnsey, P., and R. Saller, R. 1987. *The Roman empire: Economy, society and culture*. London.

Gascou, J. 1985. "Les grands domaines, la cite et l'état en Egypte byzantine." *Travaux et mémoires* 9: 1–90.

Geertz, C. 1983. *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York.

Gellner, E. 1981. *Muslim society*. Cambridge.

———. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford.

Gelzer, M. 1909. *Studien zur byzantinischen Verwaltung Ägyptens*. Leipzig.

Gibbon, E. 1993 [1776–1788]. *The decline and fall of the Roman empire*. With an introduction by H. Trevor-Roper. 6 vols. London.

Giddens, A. 1986. *The nation-state and violence*. Cambridge.

Giliberti, G. 1996. *Studi sulla massima "Caesar omnia habet": Seneca, De beneficiis*, 7.6.3. Torino. (p. 465)

Glete, J. 2002. *War and the state in early modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch republic and Sweden as fiscal-military states, 1500–1660*. London.

Goldsworthy, A. 2007. "War." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 76–121. Cambridge.

Gommans, J. 2002. *Mughal warfare: Indian frontiers and high roads to empire, 1500–1700*. London.

González, J. 1986. "The *Lex Irnitana*: A new copy of the Flavian municipal law." *Journal of Roman Studies* 76: 147–243.

Goodman, M. 1987. *The ruling class of Judea: The origins of the Jewish revolt against Rome*, A.D. 66–70. Cambridge.

———. 2007. *Rome and Jerusalem: The clash of ancient civilizations*. London.

Gradel, I. 2002. *Emperor worship and Roman religion*. Oxford.

Grandet, P. 1986. "Les songes d'Atia et d'Octavius: Note sur les rapports d'Auguste et de l'Egypte." *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 203: 363–379.

Grenier, J.-C. 1995. "L'Empereur et le pharaon." In W. Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Vol. 2.18.5, 3181–3194. Berlin.

- Grey, C. 2007. "Contextualizing colonatus: The origo of the late Roman empire." *Journal of Roman Studies* 97: 155–175.
- Guerber, E., and F. Hurlet. 2008. "L'empire romain du III^e siècle av. J.-C. au III^e siècle apr. J.C.: Un modèle historiographique à l'épreuve." In F. Hurlet, ed., *Les empires: Antiquité et Moyen Âge: Analyse comparée*, 81–105. Rennes.
- Gutsfeld, A. 1989. *Römische Herrschaft und einheimischer Widerstand in Nordafrika: Militärische Auseinandersetzungen Roms mit den Nomaden*. Stuttgart.
- Habib, I. 1999. *The agrarian system of Mughal India 1556–1707*. 2nd rev. ed. New Delhi.
- Haensch, R. 1994. "Die Bearbeitungsweise von Petitionen in der Provinz Aegyptus." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 100: 487–511.
- Halfmann, H. 1979. *Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* Göttingen.
- Hammond, M. 1957. "Composition of the senate, A.D. 68–235." *Journal of Roman Studies* 47: 74–81.
- Harris, W. V. 1989. *Ancient literacy*. Cambridge, MA.
- . 2001. *Restraining rage: The ideology of anger control in classical antiquity*. Cambridge, MA.
- Hartmann, U. 2001. *Das palmyrenische Reich*. Stuttgart.
- Harries, J. 1999. *Law and empire in late antiquity*. Cambridge.
- Hauken, T. 1998. *Petition and response: An epigraphic study of petitions to Roman emperors, 181–249*. Bergen, NJ.
- Haynes, Ian. 1999. "Military service and cultural identity in the auxilia," in A. Goldsworthy and I. Haynes, eds., *The Roman army as a community*, 165–174. Ann Arbor.
- Heather, P. 1991. *Goths and Romans 332–489*. Oxford.
- Hekster, O., G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds. 2007. *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20–24, 2006)*. Leiden.
- Herklotz, F. 2007. *Prinzeps und Pharao: Der Kult des Augustus in Ägypten*. Frankfurt.
- Hilali, A. 2007. "La crise de 238 en Afrique et ses impacts sur l'empire romain." In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20–24, 2006)*, 57–66. Leiden. (p. 466)

Hirschfeld, O. 1905. *Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten bis auf Diocletian*. 2nd ed. Berlin.

Hodgson, M. G. S. 1974. *The venture of Islam: Conscience and history in a world civilization*. 3 vols. Chicago.

Højte, J. M. (2005). *Roman imperial statue bases: From Augustus to Commodus*. Aarhus.

Holder, P. 2003. "Auxiliary deployment in the reign of Hadrian." In J. J. Wilkes, ed., *Documenting the Roman army: Essays in honour of Margaret Roxan*, 101–145. London.

Hopkins, K. 1978a. *Conquerors and slaves: Sociological studies in Roman history 1*. Cambridge.

———. 1978b. "Rules of evidence: *The emperor in the Roman world (31 B.C.–A.D. 337)* by Fergus Millar." *Journal of Roman Studies* 68: 178–186.

———. 1980. "Taxes and trade in the Roman empire (200 B.C.–A.D. 400)." *Journal of Roman Studies* 70: 101–125.

———, ed. 1983. *Death and renewal: Sociological studies in Roman history 2*. Cambridge.

———. 2000. "Rents, taxes, trade and the city of Rome." In E. Lo Cascio, ed., *Mercati permanenti e mercati periodici nel mondo romano*, 253–267. Bari.

———. 2009. "The political economy of the Roman empire." In I. Morris and W. Scheidel, eds., *The dynamics of ancient empires*, 178–204. New York.

Hopkins, K., and Burton, G. 1983a. "Political succession in the late republic (249–50 BC)." In K. Hopkins, ed., *Death and renewal: Sociological studies in Roman history 2*: 31–119. Cambridge.

———. 1983b. "Ambition and withdrawal: The senatorial aristocracy under the emperors." In K. Hopkins, ed., *Death and renewal: Sociological studies in Roman history 2*: 120–200. Cambridge.

Howard-Johnston, J. D. 2010. *Witnesses to a world crisis: Historians and histories of the Middle East in the seventh century*. Oxford.

Howgego, C. 1995. *Ancient history from coins*. London.

———. 2009. "Some numismatic approaches to quantifying the Roman economy." In A. K. Bowman and A. Wilson, eds., *Quantifying the Roman economy: Methods and problems*, 287–295. Oxford.

Humfress, C. 2007. *Orthodoxy and the courts in late antiquity*. Oxford.

Hunt, A. S., ed. and trans. 1927. *The Oxyrhynchus papyri*. Vol. 17. London.

Huntington, S. P. 1968. *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven, CT.

Inalcik, H. 1994. *An economic and social history of the Ottoman empire*, vol. 1: 1300–1600. Cambridge.

Isaac, B. 1986. "Military diplomata and extraordinary levies for campaigns." In W. Eck and H. Wolff, eds., *Heer und Integrationspolitik: Die römischen Militärdiplome als historische Quelle*, 258–264. Cologne.

———. 1993. *The limits of empire: The Roman army in the east*. Rev. ed. Oxford.

Jacques, F., and J. Scheid. 1990. *Rome et l'intégration de l'empire 44 av. J.-C.–260 ap. J.C. Tome 1: Les structures de l'empire romain*. Paris.

Johnston, A. C. 1936. *Roman Egypt to the reign of Diocletian*. Baltimore.

Jones, A. H. M. 1964. *The later Roman empire, 284–602: A social economic and administrative survey*. 3 vols. Oxford.

Jongman, W. 2006. "The rise and fall of the Roman economy: Population, rents and entitlement." In P. F. Bang, M. Ikeguchi, and H. Ziche, eds., *Ancient economies, modern methodologies: Archaeology, comparative history, models and institutions*, 237–254. Bari. (p. 467)

Jördens, A. 2009. *Statthalterliche Verwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Studien zum praefectus Aegypti*. Stuttgart.

Kehoe, D. P. 2007. *Law and the rural economy in the Roman empire*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Kelly, B. 2011. *Petitions, litigation, and social control in Roman Egypt*. Oxford.

Kelly, C. M. 1994. "Later Roman bureaucracy: Going through the files." In A. Bowman and G. D. Woolf, eds., *Literacy and power in the ancient world*, 161–176. Cambridge.

———. 2004. *Ruling the later Roman empire*. Cambridge, MA.

Kennedy, P. 1988. *The rise and fall of great powers*. London.

Keppie, L. 1983. *The making of the Roman army: From republic to empire*. Totowa, NJ.

Khoury, D. R. 1997. *State and provincial society in the Ottoman empire: Mosul, 1540–1834*. Cambridge.

Kolb, A. 2000. *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im römischen Reich*. Berlin.

Kolbe, W. 1913. *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. 5.1: *Inscriptiones Laconiae, Messeniae, Arcadiae*. Berlin.

König, J., 2005. *Athletics and literature in the Roman empire*. Cambridge.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Lambrechts, P. 1936. *La composition du sénat romain de l'accession au trône d'Hadrien à la mort de Commode (117-192)*. Antwerp.

———. 1937. *La composition du sénat romain de Septime Sévère à Dioclétien, 193-284*. Budapest.

Lane, F. C. 1958. "Economic consequences of organized violence." *Journal of Economic History* 18: 401-417.

Lattimore, O. 1951. *Inner Asian frontiers of China*. 2nd ed. New York.

Le Bohec, Y. 1994. *The imperial Roman army*. London.

London, J. 1997. *Empire of honour: The art of government in the Roman world*. Oxford.

———. 2005. *Soldiers and ghosts: A history of battle in classical antiquity*. New Haven, CT.

Lepelley, C. 1979. *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au bas-empire*. Paris.

———. 1983. "Quot curiales, tot tyranni: L'image du décurion oppresseur au bas-empire." In E. Frezouls, ed., *Crise et redressement dans les provinces européennes de l'empire (milieu du IIIe-milieu du IVe siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Strasbourg), 143-156.

Liebeschuetz, W. 2001. *The decline and fall of the Roman city*. Oxford.

Lipsius, J. 1598. *De militia romana libri quinque, commentarius ad Polybium*. Editio nova aucta varié and castigata. Antwerp.

Lobur, J. A. 2008. *Consensus, concordia, and the formation of Roman imperial ideology*. London.

Lo Cascio, E. 2000. *Il princeps e il suo impero: Studi di storia amministrativa e finanziaria romana*. Bari.

———. 2007. "The early Roman empire: the state and the economy." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*. 619-647. Cambridge.

Lucrezi, F. 1982. *Leges super principem: La "monarchia costituzionale" di Vespasiano*. Naples.

Luttwak, E. N. 1976. *The grand strategy of the Roman empire from the first century A.D. to the third*. Baltimore.

Maas, M., ed. 2005. *The Cambridge companion to the age of Justinian*. Cambridge.

MacCormack, S. 1981. *Art and ceremony in late antiquity*. Berkeley.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

- MacMullen, R. 1984. "The legion as society." *Historia* 33: 440–456.
- . 1987. "Tax-pressure in the Roman empire." *Latomus* 46: 737–754.
- . 1988. *Corruption and the decline of Rome*. New Haven, CT.
- Mann, M. 1986. *The sources of social power*. Vol. 1. Cambridge.
- Mattern, S. P. 1999. *Rome and the enemy: Imperial strategy in the principate*. Berkeley, CA.
- Matthews, J. F. 1975. *Western aristocracies and imperial court* AD364–425. Oxford.
- . 2000. *Laying down the law: A study of the Theodosian Code*. New Haven, CT.
- Mattingly, D. J. 1995. *Tripolitania*. London.
- , ed. 1997a. *Dialogues in Roman imperialism: Power, discourse, and discrepant experience in the Roman empire*. Ann Arbor, MI.
- . 1997b. "Africa: A landscape of opportunity?" In D. J. Mattingly, ed., *Dialogues in Roman imperialism: Power, discourse, and discrepant experience in the Roman empire*, 117–142. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Meyer-Zwiffelhofer, E., 2002. *Politikôs archein: zum Regierungsstil der senatorischen Statthalter in der kaiserzeitlichen griechischen Provinzen*. Stuttgart.
- Millar, F. 1977. *The emperor in the Roman world*. London.
- . 1993. *The Roman Near East 31BC–AD337*. Cambridge, MA.
- . 2006. *A Greek Roman empire: power and belief under Theodosius II, 408–450*. Berkeley, CA.
- Mitchell, S. 1976. "Requisitioned transport in the Roman empire: A new inscription from Pisidia." *Journal of Roman Studies* 66: 106–136.
- Mommsen, T., ed. 1872. *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*. Vol. 5.1. Berlin.
- , ed. 1873. *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*. Vol. 3.1. Berlin.
- . 1887. *Römische Staatsrecht*. Vol. 2.2. Leipzig.
- Morley, N. 1996. *Metropolis and hinterland: The city of Rome and the Italian economy, 200B.C.–A.D.200*. Cambridge.
- Murphey, R. 1999. *Ottoman warfare 1500–1700*. London.
- Murphy, T. 2004. *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The empire in the encyclopedia*. Oxford.

Musto, R. G. 2003. *Apocalypse in Rome: Cola di Rienzo and the politics of the new age*. Berkeley, CA.

Naas, V. 2011. "Imperialism, mirabilia, and knowledge: Some paradoxes in the *Naturalis Historia*." In R. Gibson and R. Morello, eds., *Pliny the Elder: Themes and contexts*, 57–70. Leiden.

Neesen, L. 1980. *Untersuchungen zu den direkten Staatsabgaben der römischen Kaiserzeit (27 v. Chr.-284 n. Chr.)*. Bonn.

Nesselhauf, H., ed. 1936. *Diplomata militaria ex constitutionibus imperatorum de civitate et conubio militum veteranorumque expressa: Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*. Vol. 16. Berlin.

Nicolet, C. 1991. *Space, geography, and politics in the early Roman empire*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Noreña, C. F., 2001. "The communication of the emperor's virtues." *Journal of Roman Studies* 91: 146–168.

———. 2011. *Imperial ideals in the Roman west: Representation, circulation, power*. Cambridge.

Nörr, D., 1969. *Imperium und Polis in der hohen Prinzipatszeit*. 2nd ed. Munich.

———. 1979. "Zur Herrschaftsstruktur des römischen Reiches: Die Städte des Ostens und das Imperium." In H. Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. Vol. II. 7.1, 3–20. Berlin.

(p. 469) Oates, J. F., A. E. Samuel, and C. B. Welles, eds. 1967. *Yale papyri in the Beinecke rare book and manuscript library*. Vol. 1. New Haven, CT.

Oliver, J. H. 1970. *Marcus Aurelius: aspects of civic and cultural policy in the east*. Princeton, NJ.

———. 1989. *Greek constitutions of early Roman emperors from inscriptions and papyri*. Philadelphia.

Pani, M. 2003. *La corte dei Cesari*. Rome.

Parker, G. 1988. *The military revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500–1800*. Cambridge.

Paterson, J., 2007. "Friends in high places: the creation of the court of the Roman emperor." In T. Spawforth, ed., *The court and court society in ancient monarchies*, 121–156. Cambridge.

Peachin, M. 1996. *Iudex vice Caesaris: Deputy emperors and the administration of justice during the principate*. Stuttgart.

———. 2007. "Exemplary government in the early Roman empire." In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006)*, 75-96. Leiden.

Pflaum, H.-G. 1950. *Les procureurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*. Paris.

———. 1960-1961. *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*. 2 vols. Paris.

Phang, S. E. 2001. *The marriage of Roman soldiers (13B.C.–A.D.235): Law and family in the imperial army*. Leiden.

———. 2008. *Roman military service: Ideologies of discipline in the late republic and early principate*. Cambridge.

Pollard, N. 2000. *Soldiers, cities and civilians in Roman Syria*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Ponting, M. 2009. "Roman silver coinage: mints, metallurgy, and production." In A. K. Bowman and A. Wilson, eds., *Quantifying the Roman economy: Methods and problems*, 269-280. Oxford.

Premmerstein, A. von 1937. *Vom Werden und Wesen des Prinzipats*. Munich.

Price, S. 1984. *Rituals and power: The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge.

Raaflaub, K. A., and M. Toher, eds. 1990. *Between republic and empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his principate*. Berkeley, CA.

Rankow, B., 2007. "Military forces." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 30-75. Cambridge.

Rathbone, D., 2007. "Military finance and supply." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 158-175. Cambridge.

Rathmann, M. 2003. *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum*. Mainz.

Rea, J. R., ed. and trans. 1984. *The Oxyrhynchus papyri*. Vol. 51. London.

Rehak, P. 2006. *Imperium and cosmos: Augustus and the northern Campus Martius*. Madison, WI.

Revell, L. 2009. *Roman imperialism and local identities*. Cambridge.

Reynolds, J. 1982. *Aphrodisias and Rome: Documents from the excavation of the theatre at Aphrodisias conducted by Professor Kenan T. Erim, together with some related texts*. London.

(p. 470) Rogers, G. M. 1991. *The sacred identity of Ephesos: Foundation myths of a Roman city*. London.

Rosenstein, N. 2006. "Aristocratic values." In N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx, eds., *A companion to the Roman republic*, 365–382. Malden, MA.

———. 2009. "War, state formation and the evolution of military institutions in ancient China and Rome." In W. Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*, 24–51. New York.

Rosenstein, N., and R. Morstein-Marx, eds. 2006. *A companion to the Roman republic*. Malden, MA.

Roymans, N. 2005. *Ethnic identity and imperial power: The Batavians in the early Roman empire*. Amsterdam.

Rowe, G. 2002. *Princes and political cultures: The new Tiberian senatorial decrees*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Russell, D. A., and N. G. Wilson, eds. and trans. 1981. *Menander Rhetor*. Oxford.

Rutledge, S. H. 2001. *Imperial inquisitions: Prosecutors and informants from Tiberius to Domitian*. London.

Sabin, P., H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds. 2007. *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*. Cambridge.

Saller, R. 1982. *Personal patronage under the early empire*. Cambridge.

Sarris, P. 2006. *Economy and society in the age of Justinian*. Cambridge.

Scheidel, W. 1996. *Measuring sex, age and death in the Roman empire: Explorations in ancient demography*. Ann Arbor, MI.

———. 2002. "A model of demographic and economic change in Roman Egypt after the Antonine plague." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15: 97–114.

———. 2007a. "Demography." In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*, 38–86. Cambridge.

———. 2007b. "Marriage, families, and survival: Demographic aspects." In P. Erdkamp, ed., *A companion to the Roman army*, 417–434. Malden, MA.

———, ed. 2009a. *Rome and China: Comparative perspectives on ancient world empires*. New York.

- . 2009b. "In search of Roman economic growth." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22: 46–70.
- . Forthcoming. "Roman wellbeing and the economic consequences of the Antonine plague." In E. Lo Cascio, ed., *L'impatto della "peste antonina."* Bari.
- Scheidel, W., I. Morris, and R. Saller, eds. 2007. *The Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world*. Cambridge.
- Schmidt-Hofner, S. 2008. *Reagieren und Gestalten: Der Regierungsstil des spätrömischen Kaisers am Beispiel der Gesetzgebung Valentinians I.* Munich.
- . 2011. "Staatswerdung von unten: Justiznutzung und Strukturgenese im Gerichtswesen der römischen Kaiserzeit." In P. Eich, S. Schmidt-Hofner, and C. Wieland, eds., *Der wiederkehrende Leviathan: Staatlichkeit und Staatswerdung in spätantike und früher Neuzeit*, 139–180. Heidelberg.
- Schneider, R. M. 2012. "The making of oriental Rome: Shaping the Trojan legend." In P. F. Bang and D. Kolodziejczyk, eds., *Universal empire: A comparative approach to imperial culture and representation in Eurasian history*, 76–129. Cambridge.
- Shaw, B. 2000. "Rebels and outsiders." In P. Garnsey, D. Rathbone, and A. K. Bowman, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., Vol. 11. 361–403. Cambridge.
- Shaw, B. D. 1983. "Soldiers and society: The army in Numidia." *Opus* 2: 133–159.
- . 1984. "Bandits in the Roman empire." *Past and Present* 105: 3–52. (p. 471)
- . 1999. "War and violence." In G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar, eds., *Late antiquity: Guide to the postclassical world*, 130–169. Cambridge, MA.
- Sherk, R. K., ed. and trans. 1988. *The Roman empire: Augustus to Hadrian*. Translated documents of Greece and Rome 6. Cambridge.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. 1973. *The Roman citizenship*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Sidebottom, H. 2007. "International relations." In P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby, eds., *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare*, vol. 2: *Rome from the late republic to the late empire*, 3–29. Cambridge.
- Slootjes, D. 2006. *The governor and his subjects in the later Roman empire*. Leiden.
- Sommer, M. 2005. *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze: Palmyra—Edessa—Dura-Europos—Hatra. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian*. Stuttgart.
- Spaul, J. 2000. *Cohors 2: The evidence for and a short history of the auxiliary infantry units of the imperial Roman army*. Oxford.

Speidel, M. A. 2009. *Heer und Herrschaft im römischen Reich der hohen Kaiserzeit*. Stuttgart.

Spencer, D. 2002. *The Roman Alexander*. Exeter.

Stauner, K. 2004. *Das offizielle Schriftwesen des römischen Heeres von Augustus bis Gallienus (27 v. Chr.-268 n. Chr.)*. Bonn.

Steensgaard, N. 1981. "Violence and the rise of capitalism: Frederic C. Lane's theory of protection and tribute." *Review* 5.2: 247-273.

Swain, S. 1996. *Hellenism and empire: Language, classicism, and power in the Greek world, AD50-250*. Oxford.

Syme, R. 1939. *The Roman revolution*. Oxford.

———. 1958. *Tacitus*. Oxford.

Talbert, R. J. A. 1984. *The senate of imperial Rome*. Princeton, NJ.

Tilly, C. 1992. *Coercion, capital and European states, AD990-1992*. rev. ed. Oxford.

Tezcan, B. 2010. *The second Ottoman empire: Political and social transformation in the early modern world*. Cambridge.

Thompson, E. A. 1952. "Peasant revolts in late Roman Gaul and Spain." *Past and Present* 2: 11-23.

Tomlin, R. 2008. "A. H. M. Jones and the army of the 4th century." In D. M. Gwynn, ed., *A. H. M. Jones and the later Roman empire*, 143-166. Leiden.

Van Creveld, M. 1999. *The rise and decline of the state*. Cambridge.

Van Dam, R. 1985. *Leadership and community in late antique Gaul*. Berkeley, CA.

———. 2007. *The Roman revolution of Constantine*. Cambridge.

Verboven, K. 2007. "Demise and fall of the Augustan monetary system." In O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn, and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises and the Roman empire: Proceedings of the seventh workshop of the international network impact of empire (Nijmegen, June 20-24, 2006)*, 245-257. Leiden.

Veyne, P. 1976. *Le pain e le cirque: Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique*. Paris.

———. 1981. "Clientèle et corruption au service de l'État: La vénalité des offices dans le bas-empire romain." *Annales:Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 36: 339-361.

Walker, D. R. 1976-78. *The metrology of the Roman silver coinage*. 3 vols. Oxford.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Wallace-Hadrill, A. 1996. "The imperial court." In A. K. Bowman, E. Champlin, and A. W. Lintott, eds., *The Cambridge ancient history, 2nd ed.*, vol. 10: *The Augustan empire, 43B.C.–A.D.69*. 283–308. Cambridge.

———. 2008. *Rome's cultural revolution*. Cambridge.

Ward-Perkins, B. 2005. *The fall of Rome and the end of civilization*. Oxford.

Watson, A. 1992. *The evolution of international society*. London. (p. 472)

Weaver, P. R. C. 1972. *Familia Caesaris: A social study of the emperor's freedmen and slaves*. Cambridge.

Webb, P. H. 1927. *The Roman imperial coinage*. Vol. 5.1. London.

Weber, E. 1976. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford, CA.

Weber, M. 1972. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen.

Weisweiler, J. 2011. "The price of integration: State and élite in Symmachus' correspondence." In P. Eich, S. Schmidt-Hofner, and C. Wieland, eds., *Der wiederkehrende Leviathan: Staatlichkeit und Staatswerdung in spätantike und früher Neuzeit*, 343–374. Heidelberg.

Whittaker, C. 1994. *Frontiers of the Roman empire: A social and economic study*. Baltimore.

Whittow, M. 1990. "Ruling the late Roman and early Byzantine city: A continuous history." *Past and Present* 129: 3–29.

Wickham, C. 1984. "The other transitions: From the ancient world to feudalism." *Past and Present* 103: 3–36.

———. 2005. *Framing the early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*. Oxford.

———. 2011. "Tributary empires: Late Rome and the Arab caliphate." In P. F. Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary empires in global history*, 205–213. Basingstoke.

Winterling, A. 1999. *Aula Caesaris: Studien zur Institutionalisierung des römischen Kaiserhofes in der Zeit von Augustus bis Commodus (31 v. Chr.-192 n. Chr.)*. Munich.

———. 2003. *Caligula: Eine Biographie*. Munich.

Witschel, C., 2008. "The Res Gestae Divi Augusti and the Roman empire." In F.-H. Mutschler and A. Mittag, eds., *Conceiving the empire*, 241–268. Oxford.

The Roman Empire II The Monarchy

Wolters, R. 1999. *Nummi signati: Untersuchungen zur römischen Münzprägung und Geldwirtschaft*. Munich.

Woolf, G. 1993. "Roman peace." In J. Rich and G. Shipley, eds., *War and society in the Roman world*, 171–194. London.

———. 1994. "Becoming Roman, staying Greek." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 40: 116–143.

———. 1998. *Becoming Roman: The origins of provincial civilisation in Gaul*. Cambridge.

———. 2001. "Inventing empire in ancient Rome." In S. Alcock et al., eds., *Empires: Perspectives from archaeology and history*, 311–322. Cambridge.

———. 2003. "The city of letters." In C. Edwards and G. Woolf, eds., *Rome the cosmopolis*, 203–221. Cambridge.

Young, G. 2001. *Rome's eastern trade: international commerce and imperial policy, 31BC–AD305*. London.

Zanker, P. 1987. *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*. Munich.

Zelin, M. 1984. *The magistrate's tael: Rationalizing fiscal reform in eighteenth-century Ch'ing China*. Berkeley, CA.

Peter Fibiger Bang

Peter Fibiger Bang is Associate Professor of History at the University of Copenhagen. He works on the comparative economic history and political economy of early empires.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The Byzantine Successor State

John F. Haldon

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0017

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of state formation in the Byzantine Empire, or the eastern Roman Empire, during the fourth century to the fifteenth century CE. It explains that the Byzantine successor state evolved out of Roman institutional arrangements structured as a hierarchy of administrative levels and that it was a complex bureaucracy which required a substantial degree of more-than-minimal clerical literacy for its day-to-day administration. The chapter also chronicles the growth of the town-based landlord elite or gentry that was associated with the economic expansion and growth of the period, and which had critical implications for state control over the distribution of resources.

Keywords: Byzantine Empire, state formation, Roman Empire, Byzantine successor state, complex bureaucracy, landlord elite, institutional arrangements, economic expansion, state control, distribution of resources

Introductory Observations

The term “Byzantine empire” refers by convention to the eastern Roman empire from the fourth (or sixth, as some prefer) century to the fifteenth century CE, that is to say, from the time when a distinctively eastern Roman political formation began to evolve, with the recognition of the cultural divisions between “Greek East” and “Latin West” in the empire’s political structure, to the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453 at the hands of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II. And although within this long period there were many substantial transformations, the elements of structural continuity are marked enough to permit such a broad chronological definition.

The Byzantine Successor State

Straddling the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor, with a few outlying territories in southern Italy and the Adriatic and Aegean areas, the Byzantine empire represented merely a rump of the eastern part of the Roman empire (Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 8–22). In many respects, it can be called an “empire” only because it presented itself to the outside world as such, yet it was territorially always quite restricted—at its height, including the Balkans and much of Anatolia, but little more. It evolved out of the collapse of eastern Roman political power following the Arab attacks and conquests of the years 634–650, themselves events that formed part of a much broader process of economic, cultural, and political transformation affecting the late ancient world from the Atlantic to northern India and beyond. By the year 700, all its North African and western Mediterranean provinces had also been lost, with the possible exception of a tenuous Roman presence in the (p. 476) Balearics. Yet the regions that it retained were among the least wealthy of its former provinces, among which Egypt had contributed as the most productive, the main source of grain for Constantinople, and a major source of the state’s tax income. From figures given by a range of late Roman sources for the eastern half of the empire (thus excluding Italy and Africa, which anyway contributed only one-eighth or so of the total), it has been calculated that Egypt contributed something like one-third of the state income (both gold and grain) derived from the prefectures of Oriens and Illyricum together; that the dioceses of Asiana, Pontica, Macedonia, and Oriens together contributed about four-fifths of the gold revenue, with Pontica and Oriens (which included the frontier regions and their hinterlands) providing a further proportion—over 50 percent—of the grain levied for the army. Comparing these figures with more detailed budgetary details from the sixteenth-century Ottoman records, it can be suggested that the income of the Balkan region up to the Danube and that of Ottoman Anatolia were very approximately equal. While there are some disparities in coverage between these regions in their late Roman and Ottoman forms, this gives a crude idea of the relative economic value of the two regions. In the late Roman period, however, the bulk of the state’s income outside of Egypt had been derived from the rich provinces of Syria, Mesopotamia, Euphratensis, Osrhoene, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Cilicia, all lost after the 640s and only partially, in their northern perimeter, recovered in the tenth century. With the loss of Egypt and these eastern provinces, therefore, and with effective control over all but the coastal periphery of much of the southern Balkans lost during the later sixth century and first half of the seventh century, the overall income of the state collapsed to a fraction of the sixth-century figure: one figure plausibly suggested is that it was reduced to a quarter (Jones 1964, 462–464; Hendy 1985, 164ff, 616–620; Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 23–42; See Map 16.1).

The Church and the theological system it represented (from the late fourth century Christianity was the official religion of the Roman state and, probably by the mid-sixth century, the majority religion within the empire) played a central role in the economy of the Roman world—it was a major landowner—as well as in imperial politics, in influencing the moral and ethical system of the Roman world, and in directing imperial religious policy. Emperors were inextricably involved in the conflicts generated by theological disagreements, given the prevailing view that the emperor was chosen by

The Byzantine Successor State

God, that he had to be “Orthodox” (however that was defined), and that his role was to defend the interests of Orthodoxy and the Roman, that is, Christian *oikoumenê* (the inhabited, civilized—Roman—world). The political implications were such that heresy was construed as treason, and opposition to the (orthodox) emperor could effectively be treated as heresy (Dagron 1993, 167–296; Whittow 1996, 126–133; Haldon 1997, 281–286, 324ff.).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 16.1 The Byzantine Empire and Its Neighbors
circa 840 CE

The Byzantine successor state evolved out of Roman institutional arrangements of the period up to the fourth and fifth centuries, structured as a hierarchy of administrative levels: at the top was the emperor, understood to be God’s representative, surrounded by a palatine and household apparatus, the center of imperial

government and administration. Civil and fiscal government was delegated (p. 477) (p. 478) until the middle of the seventh century from the emperor to the Praetorian prefects, whose prefectures were the largest territorial circumscriptions in the state; each prefecture was further divided into *dioecesaes* or dioceses, which had a predominantly fiscal aspect; and each diocese was divided into *provinciae* or provinces, territorial units of fiscal and judicial administration. These were further divided into self-governing poleis or *civitates*, the cities, each with its *territorium* or hinterland (which might be more or less extensive, according to geographical, demographic, and other factors). The late Roman state was thus a complex bureaucracy requiring a substantial degree of more than minimal clerical literacy for its day-to-day administration, rooted in and imposed upon a series of overlapping social formations structured by local variations on essentially the same social relations of production across the whole central and east Mediterranean and Balkan world. Social and political tensions were exacerbated by religious divisions, local economic conditions, imperial politics, and the burden placed upon the tax-paying population as a result of the state’s needs in respect of its administrative apparatus and, in particular, its armies (Haldon 2005).

The loss to Islam during the seventh century of the eastern provinces that had evolved heterodox traditions marked a real break with the Roman past (Donner 1981; Kennedy 1986; Kaegi 1992). Here, versions of Christianity had evolved (in particular “monophysitism,” the belief in a single divine nature of God) that did not conform to the dyophysite dogma (belief in two inseparable and indivisible natures) which, by the 630s, had become the orthodoxy of the emperors. The result had been a cycle of persecution and opposition, and although it is no longer believed that these differences meant an easier victory for the invading Muslim armies, such disaffection clearly played a role in

The Byzantine Successor State

the general situation. As a result, early Byzantine state and society were able to evolve a series of identifying characteristics crucial to their later history: “neo-Chalcedonian” (i.e., dyophysite) orthodoxy, the Greek language of bureaucracy and army, the concept of the Romans as the Chosen People (a role forfeited by the Jews for their failure to recognize and acknowledge the Messiah), and the geopolitical coherence, centralized bureaucratic administrative structure, and traditions of the empire, as well as the symbolic function of Constantinople. All these features acted as unifying elements that enabled a much-reduced late ancient state system to survive well into the medieval period, and to endow the social formation which that state sheltered with a particular character and sense of its own special identity, a sense that survived the collapse of the state itself (Jones 1964; Hussey 1966, part 1; Ostrogorsky 1968; Brown 1971; Winkelmann 1980; Angold 1984; Gray 2005).

Late Roman and Byzantine society were dominated throughout their history by tributary relations of production. That is to say, surplus was appropriated through a variety of forms of tax and rent, which represented the prevailing and usual forms of surplus value or surplus labor. This does not mean that they were the only *existing* forms of surplus appropriation in this particular social formation. Slavery continued to exist, but even as early as the fourth century in the east seems to have played only a very limited role in production and, more importantly, in the (p. 479) production of the wealth of the dominant class. There is plenty of imperial legislation to suggest that from this time on agricultural slaves were being rapidly turned into the equivalent of *coloni adscripticii*, that is to say, free persons—nominally—but bound to their estate or tenancy. The *legal* definition of a slave as an unfree person continued in use, of course, and reduction to slave status remained a punishment throughout the Byzantine period. But as agricultural slaves came to approximate more and more to various degrees of tied but free tenants, the *economic* reality of slavery disappears: rent and tax, not the intensive, plantation-based exploitation of chattel-slaves, seem to be the main form of surplus appropriation from the later third century and afterward. Domestic and small-scale industrial slavery continued to exist, too, but this hardly affects the *dominant* mode of surplus appropriation. And even when large numbers of prisoners were taken in war and “enslaved,” they were often then given state or other land to cultivate, and expressly freed for a specific period from state taxation in order to allow them to bring their plots into production—hardly the typical treatment of slaves in the classical sense of the term. In spite of some exaggeration in certain sources, therefore, slaves do not appear to have played a significant role in overall production, and in particular in the production of surplus wealth, in the late Roman and Byzantine world after the fourth century.

The various institutional forms that surplus appropriation could take were many. Private landlords normally collected rent in cash or kind, according to the nature of the contract or lease and according to the economic conditions of the time or area, or both (availability of market exchange was clearly essential). There is some evidence, although sparse, of wage-laborers tied to estates and paid in cash or kind also, apart from the journeymen and day-laborers typical of urban environments. Until the last two centuries of the empire, however, this sector of the economy appears to have been fairly marginal.

The Byzantine Successor State

The state exacted surpluses in both cash and kind (for the regular taxes on land, for example), as well as through a variety of labor-services: maintenance of the postal stations and horses, for example, or the production of iron ore, woven cloths, and so on, which would be calculated according to centrally determined tables of equivalence. Equally, local communities were on occasion required to help with the building of roads and bridges or fortifications, and to billet and feed soldiers and their officers, imperial officials and messengers, and so on. By the ninth century, and probably from the seventh century, the state demanded the production of weapons and various items of military equipment from the appropriate craftsmen among the provincial populations, imposed as additional *corvées*; extraordinary levies in food or grain were common; while military service itself, though not meriting exemption from the chief land- and hearth-taxes, did bring freedom from extraordinary levies and similar impositions. But the crucial point about all these forms of surplus appropriation, except for the wage-labor sector, is that they were obtained without exception through noneconomic coercion—whether “customary” obligations and the force of law, as in most cases, backed up ultimately by imperial military might, or by simple threats and bullying by state officials, Churchmen, or private (p. 480) landlords. This was an agrarian society of peasants and rural artisans, and they were the only realistic source of surplus wealth production on a large scale for the state. Private commerce and exchange was extensive after the economic recovery of the mid-ninth to early eleventh centuries, but the state appears to have had only limited access to its profits. Only at the very end of the Byzantine period, when the state was reduced to a few districts in the southern Balkans and the Aegean islands, did commerce become a significant element in the state economy. But by then the Byzantine empire was itself an insignificant political force in the eastern Mediterranean (Haldon 1993, 109ff.; 1997; Oikonomides 1996).

Political-Historical Overview

In spite of the problems faced by the eastern half of the empire in the middle and later fifth century, its greater structural cohesiveness and flexibility enabled it to survive both external attacks as well as the disruption of economic and trading patterns. Indeed, in the late fifth and early sixth centuries a major reform of the bronze coinage was undertaken that was to provide the basic framework for the monetary system of the empire until the twelfth century. The strength of the empire enabled it during the sixth century, under the emperor Justinian I (527–565), to take the offensive and to recover large regions that had been lost to invaders or settlers, including North Africa from the Vandals, Italy from the Ostrogoths and southeast Spain from the Visigoths. Although the cost of this expansionism was very great, the eastern Roman state in the early 630s still embraced North Africa, Egypt, modern Syria, western Iraq, and western Jordan, along with Lebanon and Palestine, Anatolia, much of the Balkans, Sicily, Sardinia, and considerable areas of Italy. Most of the Balkans was out of effective central control, dominated by Slav or other invaders, albeit this reality was not recognized in official imperial pronouncements on the

The Byzantine Successor State

region. But these gains were short-lived: the Lombard occupation of much of northern, central, and southern Italy from the late 560s, the inability of the empire to maintain effective military forces in the western Mediterranean, and the distraction and threat of warfare in the east meant that most of these territorial gains had been lost well before the end of the seventh century. A major war with the Persian kingdom of the Sassanid dynasty, stimulated by the usurpation of the tyrant Phocas (602–610) and murder of the emperor Maurice, lasted until the Byzantine victory achieved by the emperor Heraclius in 627. But both states were exhausted by the long years of warfare and economic dislocation.

When, therefore, the Arabs emerged in the 630s from the Arabian peninsula under the banner of Islam and the holy war, imperial resistance was little more than token. By 642 all of Egypt and the Middle Eastern provinces had been lost, Arab forces had penetrated deep into Asia Minor and Libya, and imperial forces had been withdrawn into Asia Minor, to be settled across the provinces of the region as (p. 481) the only available means of supporting them. Within a period of some twelve years the empire lost something over half its area and three-quarters of its resources—a drastic loss for an imperial state that still had to maintain and equip a considerable army and an effective administrative bureaucracy if it was to survive at all. While many of the developments that led to this transformation were in train long before the seventh-century crisis, it was this conjuncture which served to bring things to a head and promote the structural responses which followed.

The defeats and territorial contraction that resulted from the expansion of Islam from the 640s in the east, on the one hand, and the arrival of the Bulgars and establishment of a permanent Bulgar Khanate in the Balkans from the 680s, on the other, radically altered the political conditions of existence of the eastern Roman state and established a new international political context. The evolution of this context was characterized by the political, cultural, and economic relations between the empire and its neighbors, on the one hand, and by the fluctuations in imperial political ideology and awareness of these relations, on the other. At the same, the cultural imperialism of Byzantium, and the powerful results of this in the Balkans and Russia, had results that have influenced, and continue to influence, the Balkans and Eastern Europe until the present day (Obolensky 1971; Franklin and Shepard 1996).

The eastern Roman empire struggled throughout its existence to maintain its territorial integrity. Its greatest problem was posed by its geographical situation, always surrounded by potential or actual enemies: in the east, the Sassanid Persian empire until the 620s, then the Islamic Caliphates, and finally the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks; in the north, various groups of immigrant Slavs (sixth to seventh centuries), along with nomadic peoples such as the Avars, Bulgars, Chazars, Hungarians (Magyars), and Pechenegs; and in Italy and the western coastal region of the Balkans the Lombards and Franks, and later both Saracens (from North Africa and Spain) and Normans (later tenth to mid-twelfth centuries). Finally, from the twelfth century, various Italian maritime powers vied in competing to maximize their influence over Byzantine emperors and territory.

The Byzantine Successor State

Overambitious (although sometimes initially very successful) plans to recover former imperial lands, and a limited and relatively inflexible budgetary system, were key structural constraints that affected the history of the empire. From the eleventh century, and especially from the later twelfth century, the empire's economy was gradually overtaken by the rapidly expanding economies of western Europe and the Italian peninsula. The capture and sack of Constantinople by the fourth crusade in 1204, and the partition of its territory among a variety of Latin principalities and a Latin "empire," a rump of the former Byzantine state, spelled the end of Byzantium as a serious international power. In spite of the reestablishment of an imperial state at Constantinople from 1261, the growth of Balkan powers such as the Serbian empire in the fourteenth century, and the Ottomans in both Anatolia and the Balkans thereafter, were to prevent any reassertion of Byzantine power in the region. By the time of its final absorption into the Ottoman state, the "empire" consisted of little more than Constantinople, some Aegean islands, and parts of the (p. 482) southern Peloponnese in Greece (Angold 1984; Whittow 1996; Haldon 2000; Gregory 2005).

Structure and Dynamic of the Byzantine State: Political System

As a representative tributary polity, the major systemic tension within the Byzantine state was that between the elite and the central political authority. For tributary systems, analyzing the relationship between states and their elites offers particularly useful insights into the ways in which such states actually work, and under what conditions centralized state power and authority is liable to break down. Unlike in modern industrial states, for example, *primary* surplus appropriation in preindustrial social formations can take place only through rent or tax, in their various forms, and is thus directly carried out by the state or dominant elite. In modern state formations, in contrast, taxation is the means whereby the state redistributes surplus value already produced and distributed between the owners or controllers of the means of production, on the one hand, and those who sell their labor power in return for a wage/salary. In both cases, the nature of social and economic contradictions and tensions between exploiters and exploited, as well as the nature of the political relations of distribution of surplus within the dominant or ruling elite, is determined by two features. First, by competition over the *distribution* of resources between potentially antagonistic elements in this equation; and second, by the *institutional forms* taken by tax and rent, and through which surplus is appropriated. Both state centers and ruling elites in premodern formations thus have an equally powerful vested interest in the maintenance of those social and economic relations to which they owe their position. The state (as embodied in a central or ruling establishment) must appropriate surplus itself, or ensure that an adequate portion of such surplus is passed on to it, to be certain of survival. But there has historically always been a tendency for the functionaries entrusted with these duties to evolve, however gradually, their own independent power base, thus representing a competitor with the state for resources. The relationship between the ruler or ruling elite and those who actually appropriate surplus on their behalf is in consequence always contradictory and potentially antagonistic because, as indicated already, dominant socioeconomic groups and states function *at the same level* of primary appropriation: since there is no real difference, except in scale and administrative organization, between the extraction of tax, and that of rent, whatever the form it takes. The antagonism is a structural antagonism—it need not necessarily be expressed through any awareness on the part of the individuals or groups in question. Furthermore, this relationship is generally not a simple one-to-one equation: the state may be embodied in a particular power elite, which may or may not originate from a dominant social class or aristocracy, for example, so that (p. 483) a whole complex of interwoven social, economic, and political vested interests is involved. But the ability of the state to extract surplus depends ultimately upon its power to limit the economic and political strength of such potentially competing groups. The only real way to achieve this has been to create, or attempt to create, a totally loyal, because totally dependent, governing class that is identified entirely with the interests of the central establishment. Byzantine emperors were enabled to achieve this, for a while (although they may not

have had this intention), by the circumstances peculiar to the seventh century. By way of comparison, it is worth noting that Ottoman rulers attempted the same in establishing the *devshirme* (the conscription of boys from Christian households to be brought up in an Islamic context and drafted into the Janissary corps), just as earlier Islamic rulers had employed slaves as a nonpartisan and loyal elite through which they could exercise power in either the military or administrative sphere. This structured relationship was crucial both to the failure of the Byzantine state to resist economic challenges from elsewhere (a consequence in part of the slow transformation of the state elite of the later seventh and early eighth centuries into an economically and politically more autonomous aristocracy by the twelfth century), as well as to the success of the Italian commercial republics in respect of their own social and economic organization (Haldon 1993).

Apparatus

The loss of control over much of the Balkans, and the conquest by the Arabs of the oriental provinces south of Asia Minor as well as the fertile Cilician region by the early eighth century, signaled, as is generally recognized, a major change in the empire's conditions of existence. The government was compelled to restructure the methods by which it extracted resources as well as the means of distributing them. It also had to reduce expenditure to conform to the reduced resource-base at its disposal. The effects of invasions and warfare on population numbers in the most affected regions, and therefore on productive capacity; on irrigation systems in more arid regions that had been turned over to arable exploitation in Hellenistic and Roman times; and on lines of communication and the state's ability to maintain a system of postal relay stations and heavier transportation were all first order shifts in the conditions in which the Roman state found itself. But a whole range of second order changes followed: the bureaucratic processes for ensuring the extraction of resources were modified, as well as that for the maintenance and support of military units, while the power relations between the central government and its representatives at various levels in the provinces also changed. The fiscal apparatus was centralized and managed through the evolving military provinces, named for the armies now based there, with taxes collected in cash and forwarded to Constantinople as well as in kind and consumed locally by the local armies. (p. 484) The older diocesan level of fiscal administration faded away, although the traditional provincial structures survived until the early ninth century, subsumed within a group of new military commands (from the early ninth century known as "themes" [*themata*]) reflecting the regions into which the field armies of the pre-Islamic conquests were withdrawn after the period 640s–660s. Roman law still provided the framework for the resolution of issues of inheritance, private property, personal disputes, and individual and corporate responsibilities and rights, although increasingly interpreted within a Christian moral framework. And although the Church certainly played an informal role in the administration of justice before this time, it was only in the later eleventh century that

The Byzantine Successor State

the emperors formally transferred legal authority to the Church in matters such as marriage and related law, and even later that the Church adjudicated in civil and criminal matters more widely.

While there are some divergences of opinion about the exact results of the political, military, and consequent economic crises that affected the Byzantine state during the seventh and eighth centuries, it is generally agreed that it was only from the very end of the eighth century that the beginnings of a recovery can be detected. But the transformed political and social geography of the empire meant an expansion of the state's ability effectively to tax and a consequent increase in imperial revenues. From the later ninth century there was an increasingly successful military action against external foes, a gradual recovery of urban economies in terms of market functions and small-scale commodity production, and increasing monetization of exchange activity. The deurbanization that was a consequence of both longer-term developments and warfare and economic dislocation was reversed, although the "ruralization" of Byzantine society was only marginally affected (Whittow 1996, 96–133; Liebeschuetz 2001; Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 43–89).

At the same time, both literary and archaeological evidence show the preeminent position taken by Constantinople. The establishment of a new imperial capital on the site of the ancient city of Byzantium in the year 330, with the imperial court, a senate, and the social, economic, and administrative consequences thereof, had far-reaching consequences for the pattern of exchange and movement of goods in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean basin, a point well-attested by the distribution of ceramics. By the decades preceding the political and economic crisis of the mid-seventh century, the regionalized nature of exchange activity within the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, focused on a number of key centers—Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, among the most important—was becoming increasingly accentuated. In the Balkans and northern and western Asia Minor, with a few exceptions, social interest for the investment of personal wealth and the accretion of prestige and status was increasingly focused on Constantinople as the best way of ensuring a niche within the imperial system. With the loss of the eastern provinces to Islam this picture became even more pronounced. For none of the cities or urban centers of Anatolia or the Balkans could compete with the imperial capital, which was henceforth and until the thirteenth century at least the single most important center of administrative, productive, and commercial activity in the region (Mango 1985).

(p. 485) In spite of the continued existence of a strong, centrally managed bureaucracy, power relations in the Byzantine world were still highly personalized. Patrimonial relations were fundamental to social and political advancement, although it is also true that the system was relatively open until the twelfth century, permitting people of very humble origins to rise to great power and wealth. From the middle of the seventh century the social elite of the empire had entered a period of transformation. The so-called senatorial aristocracy of the later Roman period was replaced by a state elite selected by the emperors and their advisers, an elite that undoubtedly included some members of the older establishment but was more directly dependent on its personal association with

emperor and court. Yet as a result of its increasing grip on state positions and the lands it accrued through the rewards attached to such service, this state “pseudo-meritocracy” soon turned into an aristocracy. During the eighth and ninth centuries it was still very dependent on the state, and during the tenth and especially the eleventh centuries it was increasingly independent. Kinship and clan identity became ever more central to an individual’s identity, the appearance of family names being a clear indicator of this development. The state—that is to say, the power elite focused around the ruler and the imperial court—had henceforth to compete directly with a social class whose enormous landed wealth and entrenched position in the apparatuses of the state meant that it posed a real threat to central control of fiscal resources (Brandes 2001; Haldon 2004; Cheynet 2006).

Urbanism

Consequent upon the stabilization of the political and military situation in Asia Minor after the early ninth century, many urban centers recovered their fortunes, chiefly those that had an obvious economic and market function for their locality. Thebes in Greece provides a good example of an urban center that made a good recovery in the later period, for by the middle of the eleventh century it had become the center of a flourishing local silk industry: local merchants and landowners had houses there, attracting artisans, peasant farmers with goods to sell, and the landless looking for employment, thus further promoting urban life. In addition, this urban regeneration is also connected with the growth of a middle Byzantine aristocracy or social elite of office and birth—later referred to as a group as *archontes* (perhaps loosely translated as “gentry”)—which possessed the resources to invest in agricultural and industrial production, in the context of competition for imperial favor and economic preeminence (Angold 1984; Bouras 2002; Dagron 2002).

Thus during the later tenth and especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries towns became economically much more important. This reflects in part the improved conditions within the empire for trade, commerce, and town-country exchange-relations to flourish. It also reflects the demands of Constantinople on the cities and towns of its hinterland for the provision of both foodstuffs and other (p. 486) goods. Concomitantly, towns began to play a central role in political developments, so that whereas in the later seventh through the mid-eleventh century most military revolts had been based in the countryside and around the headquarters of the local general, during the eleventh century and thereafter such political opposition to the central government is almost always centered in towns, whose populace also appear in the sources as a body of self-aware citizens with specific interests. Communal identity did not go much beyond this (although Byzantine Italy presents some exceptions, especially in connection with local efforts to attain a degree of local self-determination: the revolt of Bari in 1009/1010, although led by the imperial officer Mleh, was clearly associated with local aristocratic and urban desires for a greater degree of autonomy: Martin 1993, 520), for Byzantine towns also fell under the sway of

The Byzantine Successor State

local magnates who held both landed wealth as well as—and this is particularly important in the Byzantine context—imperial titles and offices. In itself, this development is no different from that found elsewhere—in Italy, for example, where it was the local elites that were the basis for the evolution of urban communal identities. In Byzantium, it is partly also a reflection of the military organization of the empire from the middle of the tenth century and after, when many towns became the seats of local military officers and their soldiers; in turn, it is also a reflection of the improved ability of the state after the crisis of the seventh and eighth centuries to supply and provision its soldiers through cash payments only, relying upon the existence of local market-exchange relationships to do the rest. Finally, it reflects the increasing domination of the countryside by these magnates, who gradually absorb considerable numbers of formerly free peasant holdings into their estates. The consequence was a reversal of the process of ruralization of economic and social life that typifies the seventh and eighth centuries (Bouras 2002; Matschke 2002). Nevertheless, in the context of the Byzantine state apparatus and political ideology, and the continued power and attraction of a Constantinople-centered government, court, and hierarchical system of precedence, as well as the state's fiscal administrative structure, the attentions of the Byzantine elite remained focused in and on the state and its apparatus, hindering the evolution of a more highly localized aristocracy that invested in the economy and society of its own towns rather than in the imperial system (Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 90-165).

Military Organization

The Byzantine state continued to maintain a considerable army, which consumed a very large portion of the state's annual revenue income in one form or another. During the period circa 640-660 the evidence suggests very strongly that the state almost ran out of cash. But it still had to maintain its armies. The solution was to distribute the soldiers across the provinces, so that they could be maintained directly through taxes on agrarian produce raised and redistributed in kind, rather than by paying salaries that could then be exchanged on the market or by garrisoning them (p. 487) in cities and bringing the supplies to the soldiers (an expensive process requiring considerable organizational investment). It should be emphasized that there is no evidence at all that soldiers were given land by the state, nor even, at this stage, that where they did come to support their military service, the state recognized this with special privileges. On the contrary, soldiers continued to enjoy the privileges they already possessed—as soldiers—in respect of exemption from extraordinary state burdens and taxes. Only during the later ninth and tenth centuries is there any concrete evidence that soldiers' lands—"military lands"—acquired a particular legal status. Major urban centers were fortified and garrisoned, and small cash payments continued to be paid to all soldiers. The former field armies became increasingly provincialized and locally rooted, becoming over time a militia that needed to be reinforced by centrally maintained professional units, based at first in and around the capital and later, as their number increased in the context of the offensive warfare of the

tenth and eleventh centuries, dispersed across the provinces. From the middle of the tenth century more and more such professional units were required to prosecute offensive warfare in the east and in the Balkans; the provincial militias became increasingly ineffective, and were only revived, in a much-altered form, during the Comnenian period and after the imperial recovery from the loss of central Anatolia to the Turks after the 1070s (Haldon 1999). Local militias based in towns as strongpoints, stiffened by a core of mercenaries and professionals, both foreign and indigenous, and based in and around the capital, became the norm, both during the twelfth century and after the fourth crusade in the successor-states of Nicaea, Trebizond, and Epiros and, after 1261, in the reestablished but territorially much smaller Byzantine state until its fall in 1453.

State and Economy

The state played a crucial role in the Byzantine economy. Indeed, the events of the seventh century entailed a reassertion of central state power over late Roman tendencies to decentralization. The state was both limited by, and in turn to a degree defined, the nature of key economic relationships, in particular those that determine the nature of the appropriation, distribution, and consumption of surpluses. This is particularly clear in respect of the issue and circulation of coin, which, even if we take into account the considerable fluctuations in both the purity of the gold *nomisma* and its fractions, and the distribution and quality of the bronze coinage of account, remained the basic mechanism through which the state converted social wealth into transferable fiscal resources. Coin was issued chiefly to oil the wheels of the state machinery; paid to maintain the armies, the fiscal apparatus, and the elite; and then partially recovered through taxation. There were periods when this system was constrained by circumstances—the seventh century in particular. But the overall effect of this state monopoly on the distribution and circulation of coin, and the weight of the fiscal apparatus on the producing population, (p. 488) was that, in a society in which all forms of social status and advancement were connected with the state (including the self-identity of the aristocracy), it was an important (although probably not the most important) factor in inhibiting investment in commercial exchanges and the expansion of that part of the economy not connected with the fiscal process. This situation itself fluctuates, of course: the increase in agricultural investment and in population, and in consequence, of the tax base of the state during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, appears to have been accompanied by a corresponding increase in local and longer-distance commercial activity and petty commodity production. But even here the demands of the state's apparatus and the fact that the social elite remained closely bound up with it served as a damper on the development of market relationships entirely free from state intervention. The effects of the survival of late ancient state centralism can clearly be seen (Hendy 1985; Morrisson 2002).

The Byzantine Successor State

The central position of the state is likewise evident in the history of its efforts to retain control of its fiscal resources. The tension between central authority and landowning elite, which inflects how the state could assess, raise, and distribute tax, is symptomatic (Winkelman 1987; Cheynet 1990). The ability of the state in the seventh and eighth centuries to implement full control over its tax base directly determined the way in which the middle and late Byzantine aristocracy evolved. Similarly, the civil wars and the fiscal crisis of the central government in the later tenth and eleventh centuries especially, the corresponding shifts in both the mode of recruitment and source of manpower for the army, as well as changes in provincial and central civil and fiscal administration can all be connected to the nature of the state's relationship with its fiscal base. There can be no doubt that the demands of the state and its relationship to the producing population and to the social elites it itself maintained or even engendered were determining features in the way the economy functioned. Social transformation and conflicts that occurred through and in the state, therefore, were indeed made possible because of the state. One can exaggerate these relationships, and we must remember that in a preindustrial society there were a thousand ways in which state control at the "microstructural level" of social existence had little obvious effect. But the existence of the eastern Roman state profoundly affected the structure of eastern Roman economy and society. Neither can properly be understood without the other (Hendy 1985, 602ff., 662ff.; 1989; Kaplan 1992; Oikonomides 2002).

Political Ideology and Symbolic Universe

The evolution of Byzantine culture and self-definition went hand-in-hand with the evolution of these facets of eastern Roman civilization, of course, and fundamentally influenced its trajectory and appearance. The structure of Church institutions (p. 489) and the notion of philanthropy were part of both the ideological as well as the socioeconomic pattern of relationships within Byzantine society, for the Church was both a representative of a belief system and a major landlord, second only to the imperial state itself. Imperial power politics were enmeshed with ecclesiastical politics, issues of dogma and theology, and the relations within the dominant social elite, from whom the majority of higher imperial and ecclesiastical officials were drawn by the tenth century. Political loyalty was understood and interpreted within the confines of notions of "orthodoxy" that only very rarely allowed provincial challenges to central power to succeed. The imposition and maintenance of a single, orthodox (i.e., neo-Chalcedonian) Christianity was always a central issue for the rulers, even if interpretations of this varied, and even if pragmatics intervened more often than not to dilute imperial responses to heresy. Internal strife over issues of dogma could shake the empire to its foundations; while the search for "right belief"—orthodoxy—directly affected individual and group actions and identities. Conflicts with the papacy similarly served to reinforce eastern Roman certainties about the Roman past and their "Rhomaic" identity. "Rome" was Constantinople, the second Rome, not the seat of the papacy in Italy, a tradition and

The Byzantine Successor State

heritage transmitted to the Russian Orthodox Church and state at Moscow, which after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 became the third Rome, under its own version of the dynastic tradition embodied in the House of Romanov (Obolensky 1971; Mango 1980; Angold 1995).

It was through this political theology that the extraction and distribution of surplus—which is to say, in effect, the continued existence of the state—was legitimated: in effect, a set of ideological narratives that highlighted the necessary duty of the state and its rulers to defend the faith and to promote the variety of associated activities that this entailed. At the same time, the rulers had to be seen to reinforce and reaffirm their particular symbolic universe through ritualized expressions of faith and the redistribution of considerable amounts of surplus wealth to religious foundations of various types or through certain ideologically legitimating ritual actions. In the Byzantine world, the complex ceremonial of the imperial palace, the close relationship between the emperor (with the state) and the Church, and the supervision by the Church of popular beliefs and kinship structures created an impressive ideological and symbolic system of legitimation. The social elite of the empire followed suit and were thus locked into a particular structural system by both economic and symbolic-ideological means. This is not unique, quite the contrary, for similar networks can be seen in the Islamic world, in western Christendom, in the Chinese empire(s), and in India—among many examples. Furthermore, in the case of both Christianity and Islam, ritual incorporation (that is to say, conversion) served as a fundamental tool of political integration and domination (Haldon 1993).

The iconoclastic controversy, over the appropriateness or not of venerating icons or holy images, while it does not seem in the light of recent research to have had the effects during the eighth century ascribed to it by both later Byzantine writers and modern historians, nevertheless threw up a whole series of questions (p. 490) about the Byzantine identity and its Roman heritage that produced, in the ninth century, a reclamation of the “classical” past in a highly inflected late ancient form, shaping the orthodox Byzantine identity thereafter and influencing the evolution of the Orthodox Church and Greek culture up to the present day. In essence, iconoclasm was a complex of factors whose roots lay well before the eighth century: the weakening of imperial authority, in ideological terms, as a result of political and military failures in the period circa 630–700; the concomitant growth of a debate about the efficacy of divine intervention in human affairs and the vested power of relics, saints’ cults, and, derivatively, of holy images; the related question of free will as opposed to divine foresight; the dependence of the emperors on a narrow clique of military and civil officials; and the local roots—that reflected also local beliefs and fears—of the former field armies in the provinces and around Constantinople. All these factors combined to produce a variety of responses to the need to define the boundaries between orthodox and heterodox, between what would bring peace, stability, and military success to the empire and what had been the cause of defeat and humiliation, seen, of course, as a punishment visited upon God’s Chosen People by the Creator himself for their sins. The violent earthquake and eruption on the island of Thera in 726 was taken as the final “warning” in this sense. But in the event, it

The Byzantine Successor State

would appear that Leo III (717–741) introduced a relatively mild form of “iconoclasm”—a term coined only by those who later vilified him and his successors—arguing that images should be removed from those parts of Church or public buildings where they might inadvertently be taken to be objects of veneration. In spite of occasional persecutions and the proclamation of an official iconoclasm at a church council held by the emperor Constantine V in 754, iconoclasm seems to have remained an entirely imperial phenomenon, attracting the full support of the church because it was imperial policy but apparently little popular interest or indeed opposition. Official imperial iconoclasm faded away without resistance after the death of the emperor Theophilos in 842. In the meantime, however, it had served as the ideological vehicle for the recovery of imperial fortunes in warfare against both Bulgars and Arabs, for the strengthening of a specifically Byzantine concept of God-given imperial authority, and for the development of a more politicized monastic community within the Byzantine orthodox world (Mango 1977; Stein 1980; Speck 2003; Auzépy 2007).

One of the most striking differences between the position of the leaders of the East Roman or Byzantine Church and the remaining Christian communities in the medieval world after the sixth century was the simple fact that during the course of the seventh century the major sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem fell outside of Roman political authority and power, so that these four patriarchates had to defend their interests independent of, and sometimes in opposition to, the state power. This had advantages, of course, since it meant that the Church could, where necessary or appropriate, pursue a policy independent of the state in issues of dogma and ecclesiastical politics. In the case of Rome in particular, this meant in the long term a successful assertion of ecclesiastical political primacy (and led to the formulation by Byzantine theologians and churchmen of the theory of the (p. 491) pentarchy—the nominal equality of the five patriarchates). In contrast to the other sees, however, the patriarch at Constantinople was able to call on the full authority and force of the state to implement Church policy; yet he also labored under the disadvantage of having constantly to maintain a pragmatic *modus operandi* with the secular authority. The emperor was God’s vice-gerent on Earth; and while he was responsible for defending, maintaining, and expanding the orthodox community, he was not responsible for actually settling issues of dogma, which was the responsibility of the theological authority within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. From the later eighth century a monastic voice was also to be heard, often very loudly, in such matters; but this division of responsibility between a secular defender of orthodoxy and a religious authority inevitably led to clashes, symptoms of a structural or systemic tension or fault line brought into the open by a variety of possible moments: a clash of personalities, differences between Constantinopolitan and other ecclesiastical authorities in which interests of Church and state were not seen as consonant, and so forth. The Byzantine imperial Church nevertheless represented a remarkably close and, for the most part, successful, if often very conservative and backward-looking, partnership between secular and religious authority. But it was no “caesaropapism,” a concept that radically misconstrues the position of the Church in Byzantium and the power and authority, prestige, and wealth it

could deploy. Emperors could not manipulate or bend to their will either the Church as a whole or Christian dogma and theology, no more than the religious and spiritual leaders of the eastern Church were mere instruments of imperial power (Hussey 1986, 297–368; Dagron 1993, 167–240; 256–279;).

The Failure of the State

The failure of the Byzantine state can be traced to a combination of three key factors. First, the organizational advantages it had possessed vis-à-vis its neighbors in the Balkans, in Italy, and in central Europe had been eroded as they had evolved the political control and military resources to enable them to compete effectively. In terms of resource management, effective political control and military organization, and ideological self-representation, states such as the kingdom of Hungary and the Norman kingdom of Sicily were easily the equals of the Byzantines by the middle of the twelfth century. Second, the changing political environment in the Islamic world, notably the arrival of the Seljuks, the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt, and, later, of the Ottomans in northwest Anatolia, impacted on Byzantine ability to maintain equilibrium on its eastern front. There were also economic implications in terms of trade and commerce, but this factor in particular represents the third crucial factor, namely the rise to political and economic independence of the Italian maritime cities, whose ability to effectively monopolize the carrying trade in the eastern Mediterranean basin (Venice in particular) and later in the Black (p. 492) Sea (Genoa) damaged both Byzantine state income and seaborne commerce. This rise was in part facilitated by the empire, which came to depend on the political loyalty and naval resources of Venice in particular in its western foreign policy, and in return for military support awarded various concessions in respect of commercial privileges—quite minimal at first, increasingly important as time went on. Genoa entered the picture as Byzantine rulers found they needed a counterweight to Venetian power and influence. Even though the imperial government—until the early years of the fourteenth century at any rate—was still able to exert some influence over the distribution of resources within the limited territories it controlled, it now competed not just with an indigenous aristocracy or landed elite (under which heading we must also understand the Church and monastic landholders) but, much more importantly, with the commercial and shipping activities of the Italian maritime cities. Indigenous merchants were an active and important element in urban economies by the eleventh century, playing an important role in the distribution of locally produced commodities—as illustrated by the fact that monastic landlords were keen to protect their rights to ship their goods uninhibited by state restrictions and *corvées*. But although they appear to have gained an increasingly significant role in the process of wealth redistribution as a whole, they played no role *in ideological terms* in the maintenance of the empire and in the social order as it was understood. The close association between the imperial court and the system of social precedence and esteem, and the enormous financial rewards that could accrue to individuals through the imperial system, meant that investment in commercial wealth was

The Byzantine Successor State

seen as neither an economic nor an ideological priority. The social elite had no interest in commerce, except as a source of luxury items, on the one hand, and as a means of selling off the surpluses from their own estates in local towns or regular fairs, or in the capital, on the other. And the evidence makes it clear that it was more often than not the landlords' own agents who did the selling and buying, rather than independent middlemen. In other words, it was the structure of the state and its functional requirements, in conjunction with the relationship between the state center and the dominant social-economic elite, which rendered commerce marginal in both practical economic and ideological terms (Laiou 2002; Matschke 2002; Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 133–165).

That there was a flourishing commerce is clear. Trade across the borders of the state could be considerable: Basil II's threat to impose an embargo on the export of Byzantine agricultural produce to northern Syria in the last years of the tenth century was enough to extract a favorable political and economic deal out of the Fatimid rulers of the region (Farag 1980). And it has also been argued that long-distance trade by Byzantine merchants before 1204 must have been substantial, given the number of trading ports around the Black Sea, for example, from which Italians were excluded before the fourth crusade (Hendy 1985, 561ff.; Harvey 1989, 208f.; Ferluga 1992b). Nevertheless, exchange was dominated by the presence of a complex and exploitative state fiscal apparatus, by the state's requirements, and by the existence of Constantinople (Harvey 1989, 235–236; Lilie 1984, 285f., 291; Hendy 1985, 570–590; Laiou 1990; Ferluga 1992b; 1987; Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 200–230). (p. 493) Investment in commerce was thus ideologically marginalized. There is every reason to think that there existed a flourishing and successful merchant class in the Byzantine empire during much of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, but little is known about it. Yet whatever its position with regard to internal trade, there is no evidence that it actively colonized trade routes and markets outside the limits of the immediate political influence of the empire, except possibly in the brief period from the 1030s to 1080s when merchants and commerce attained a slightly higher status than had been usual under emperors who needed to build up a metropolitan political base. Even in the Black Sea, it was state policy that protected Byzantine commerce, not merchants themselves (Lilie 1984, 136–144).

This marks a crucial difference from the Italian maritime merchant cities with which the Byzantines did business in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries, especially Venice, Genoa, and Amalfi, where elite involvement in trade brought social status and wealth and was intimately associated with access to political power (Lopez 1937; 1938; Hussey 1966, 251–274; Hyde 1973; Martin 1988; Abulafia 1987). The economic and political well-being of the city as state was to a large extent coterminous with that of the social elite and its dependents, the two inextricably bound together through the myriad market relationships that successful commercial investments generated in the home context. Italian commercial infiltration of the Byzantine economic and exchange sphere during the twelfth century, culminating in the concessions achieved under the emperors following Manuel 1, was facilitated because Italian commerce was on a small scale and regarded as unimportant to the economic priorities of both state and aristocracy. Demographic

The Byzantine Successor State

expansion in Italy stimulated the demand for Byzantine grain and other agrarian produce, which meant that Venetian and other traders slowly built up an established network of routes, ports, and market bases, originally based on carrying Byzantine bulk as well as luxury goods and Italian or western imports to Constantinople, later expanding to a longer-distance commerce to meet the needs of a growing Italian market (Lemerle 1977, 309; Lilie 1984, 290–302; Ferluga 1988, 40–41; Martin 1988).

Byzantine failure to evolve as a commercial power at a time of widespread economic and commercial expansion was the result of a complex interaction of statist cultural and political-economic structures and the interests of the dominant social-economic elite. Indeed, from a sociological perspective, it offers a classic example of the ways in which sets of established sociocultural practices rooted in perceived vested interests and determined by a specific cultural logic failed to compete with more powerful and dynamic competitors, and in which perceptions of how to compete misrecognized the dynamics and potential of the established arrangements. Given the particular problems faced by Byzantine rulers both before 1081 and after the reorganization of central government and fiscal administration under the first rulers of the Komnenos dynasty (especially Alexios I, 1081–1118), Byzantine ways of understanding the world rendered an interest in commerce both economically and politically irrelevant. While this may at times have been a conscious or willed rejection, it is important to understand that it was conditioned by the particular evolutionary trajectory of Byzantine society and state structures (p. 494) over several centuries. It is less the fact that interest in trade and commerce did not exist, because at some levels of society it clearly did; but rather that, for those at the top of the social scale, it was perceived as both economically unimportant and socially and culturally demeaning, while for those who were involved in trade it brought no social advancement. There are no Byzantine merchant aristocrats in the period before the fourth crusade.

The events of 1204 shattered the old order; and when after 1261 a reconstituted central imperial state was revived, it inhabited a very different world indeed, not simply in terms of the well-established political presence of western powers in the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean regions but also in terms of the ability to maintain itself. The reduced income derived from the appropriation of surplus through tax on a much smaller, and constantly shrinking, territorial base; the fragmentation of territory and political authority; and the lack of a serious naval power with which to defend its interests were fundamental. Income derived from taxes on commerce played a proportionately larger role in real terms as well as in the eyes of the central government. Yet the traditional elite, with few exceptions, was still based on the income from land, while the state itself was unable to compete with Italian and other commercial capital and shipping. Byzantine attempts to challenge Venetian or Genoese power were met with aggression and the destruction of Byzantine ships and facilities. On the whole, and with a few exceptions, “Byzantines” or “Greeks” played a generally subordinate role to Italians, as very small-scale entrepreneurs, as middlemen, and as wholesalers; rarely as bankers or major investors, still more rarely in major commercial contracts. And in the course of the thirteenth century the market demands of Italian-borne commerce began also to influence the

patterns of production within the empire. Byzantine governments no longer had any effective role in managing or directing the production of wealth (Lilie 1984; Angold 1984a; Laiou 1990; Laiou and Morrisson 2005, 155–165, 224–230).

Conclusion

In a broader perspective, the internal articulation of relations between central governments or power-elites, and elites more generally, is especially relevant when the effects of an expanding economy upon the fiscal structures of centralized (or relatively centralized) bureaucratic states are considered. This is especially so where there may be an increase in commercial activity both within and, much more importantly, across political boundaries. In the Byzantine case, to begin with, the growth of a local, town-based landlord elite or gentry—the *archontes* of the eleventh century and afterward—has been reasonably associated with the economic expansion and growth of that period. Such developments clearly had critical implications for state control over the distribution of resources. The central government and its fiscal apparatus were faced with a more diverse, and (p. 495) therefore more complex, tax base. They were also presented with a challenge over the appropriation of surplus wealth, the distribution of such surpluses, and the way in which they might be invested. The state wanted as much as it could lay its hands on to support its own apparatus and existence. Private landlords and others were thus in competition with the state, even if this was not always explicitly so (Angold 1984b; Harvey 1989, 74f., 216f.). And it was the form taken by the competition between state center, local gentry, and magnate elite in the particular context of the institutional organization and ideology of Byzantine economy and society that determined the possibilities open to rulers to reorganize the fiscal apparatus and methods of direct control over resources and territory. The Byzantine state survived as long as it did because its established state elite and aristocracy as well as the evolving provincial and urban elites of the period from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onward fully bought into the values of the established, imperial orthodox and Constantinopolitan-centered political and ideological system, with all the advantages as well as all the constraints that followed.

It is clear that the empire's internal history can only be understood in its international context. Therefore, the dissolving effects of commercial activity on a heavily bureaucratized state, with relatively inflexible “command economy” methods of assessing, collecting, and redistributing surplus wealth based predominantly upon agrarian production, contrast strongly with the dynamic of the Italian trading cities. But the latter did not themselves escape the same structural difficulties. During the sixteenth century, and as a result of their success and the growth of their international political and cultural identity, these merchant elites were increasingly drawn into an aristocratic and anticommercial culture, a development that had important consequences for their later

development in respect of the relationship between finance, trade, and political power (Davis 1962; Georgelin 1978; and, in a wider context, Braudel 1972, esp. 725ff.).

References

Abulafia, D. 1987. *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean, 1100–1400*. London.

Angold, M. 1984a. *The Byzantine empire 1025–1204: A political history*. London.

———. 1984b. “Archons and dynasts: local aristocracies and the cities of the later Byzantine empire.” In M. Angold, ed., *The Byzantine aristocracy, IX to XIII centuries*, 236–253. Oxford.

———. 1995. *Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni 1081–1261*. Cambridge.

Auzépy, M.-F. 2007. *L’histoire des iconoclastes*. Paris.

Bouras, C. 2002. “Aspects of the Byzantine city, eighth-fifteenth centuries.” In A. Laiou et al., eds., *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, 497–528. Washington, DC.

Brandes, W. 2001. *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main.

Braudel, F. 1972 *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*. New York.

Brown, P. 1971 *The world of late antiquity*. London.

(p. 496) Cheynet, J.-C. 1990. *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*. Paris.

———. 2006. *The Byzantine aristocracy and its military function*. Aldershot.

Dagron, G. 1993. “L’Église byzantine au VIIe siècle.” In *Histoire du christianisme IV: évêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)*. Paris.

———. 2002. “The urban economy, seventh-twelfth centuries.” In A. Laiou et al., eds., *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, 393–461. Washington, DC.

Davis, J. C. 1962. *The decline of the Venetian nobility as a ruling class*. Baltimore.

Donner, F. 1981. *The early Arabic conquests*. Princeton, NJ.

Farag, W. 1980. *The truce of Sacfar*, A.D. 998. Birmingham.

The Byzantine Successor State

Ferluga, J. 1987. "Der byzantinische Handel nach Norden im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert." In K. Düvel, N. Jankuhn, H. Siems, and D. Timpe, eds., *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa, IV*, 616–642. Göttingen.

———. 1988. "Der byzantinische Handel auf der Balkanhalbinsel vom VII. bis zum Anfang des XIII. Jahrhunderts." In *Papers Presented at the Vth International Congress of South-East European Research Studies, Belgrade 1984*, 31–52. Skopje.

(Repr. in

J. Ferluga, *Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Provinzverwaltung VI–XIII Jahrhundert*. 1992: 159–182. Amsterdam.)

———. 1992a. *Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Provinzverwaltung VI–XIII Jahrhundert*. Amsterdam.

———. 1992b. "Der byzantinische Handel auf der Balkanhalbinsel vom VII. bis zum Anfang des XIII. Jahrhunderts." In J. Ferluga, ed., *Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Provinzverwaltung VI–XIII Jahrhundert*, 159–182. Amsterdam.

Franklin, S. and Shepard, J. 1996. *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200*. London.

Georgelin, J. 1978. *Vénise au siècle des lumières*. Paris.

Gray, P. 2005. "The legacy of Chalcedon: Christological problems and their significance." In M. Maas, ed., *Companion to the age of Justinian*, 215–238. Cambridge.

Gregory, T. 2005. *A history of Byzantium*. Malden, MA.

Haldon, J. F. 1993. *The state and the tributary mode of production*. London.

———. 1997. *Byzantium in the seventh century: The transformation of a culture*. Cambridge.

———. 1999. *Warfare, state and society in the Byzantine world, 565–1204*. London.

———. 2000. *Byzantium: A history*. Stroud.

———. 2005. "Economy and society: How did the empire work?" In M. Maas, ed., *Companion to the age of Justinian*, 28–59. Cambridge.

———. 2004. "The fate of the late Roman senatorial elite: Extinction or transformation?" In J. F. Haldon and L. Conrad, eds., *Elites old and new in the Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, 179–234. Princeton, NJ.

Harvey, A. 1989. *Economic expansion in the Byzantine empire 900–1200*. Cambridge.

Hendy, M. F. 1985. *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy, 300–1450*. Cambridge.

The Byzantine Successor State

- . 1989. “‘Byzantium, 1081–1204’: The economy revisited, twenty years on.” In M. F. Hendy, *The Economy, Fiscal Administration and Coinage of Byzantium*, iii. London.
- Hussey, J. 1986. *The orthodox church in the Byzantine empire*. Oxford.
- Hussey, J. M., ed. 1966. *The Cambridge medieval history*. Vol. 4, *The Byzantine empire*. Rev. ed. Cambridge.
- Hyde, K. 1973. *Society and politics in medieval Italy: The evolution of the civic life 1000–1350*. London.
- (p. 497) Jones, A. H. M. 1964. *The later Roman empire: A social, economic and administrative survey*. 3 vols. Oxford.
- Kaegi, W. E. 1992. *Byzantium and the early Islamic conquests*. Cambridge.
- Kaplan, M. 1992. *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI^e au XI^e siècles*. Paris.
- Kennedy, H. 1986. *The prophet and the age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century*. London.
- Laiou, A. 1990. “Händler und Kaufleute auf dem Jahrmarkt.” In G. Prinzing and D. Simon, eds., *Fest und Alltag in Byzanz*, 53–70. Munich.
- Laiou, A., et al., eds. 2002. *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*. Washington, DC.
- Laiou, A., and C. Morrisson. 2005. *The Byzantine economy*. Cambridge.
- Lemerle, P. 1977. *Cinq Études sur le XI^e siècle byzantin*. Paris.
- Liebeschuetz, J. H. W. G. 2001. *The decline and fall of the Roman city*. Oxford.
- Lilie, R.-J. 1984. *Handel und Politik zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich und den italienischen Kommunen Venedig, Pisa und Genua in der Epoche der Komnenen und der Angeloi (1081–1204)*. Amsterdam.
- Lopez, R. S. 1937. “Aux origines du capitalisme génois.” *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* 9: 429–454.
- . 1938. *Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo*. Bologna.
- Mango, C. 1977. “The liquidation of iconoclasm and the patriarch Photius.” In A. A. M. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm: Papers given at the ninth spring symposium of Byzantine Studies*, 133–140 (repr. in Mango 1984: no. 13). Birmingham.
- . 1980. *Byzantium: The empire of New Rome*. London.
- . 1985. *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV^e–VII^e siècle)*. Paris.

The Byzantine Successor State

Martin, J.-M. 1993. *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle*. Rome.

Martin, M. 1988. "The Venetians in the Byzantine empire before 1204." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13: 201-214.

Matschke, K.-P. 2002. The late Byzantine urban economy, thirteenth-fifteenth centuries. In A. Laiou et al., eds., *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, 463-495. Washington, DC.

Morrisson, C. 2002. "Byzantine money: Its production and circulation." In A. Laiou et al., eds., *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, 909-966. Washington, DC.

Obolensky, D. 1971. *The Byzantine commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500-1453*. London.

Oikonomides, N. 1996. *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe-XIe s.)*. Athens.

———. 2002. *The role of the Byzantine state in the economy*. In A. Laiou et al., eds., *The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, 973-1058. Washington, DC.

Ostrogorsky, G. 1968. *A history of the Byzantine state*. Oxford.

Speck, P. 2003. *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine historical sources*. Aldershot.

Stein, D. 1980. *Der Beginn des byzantinischen Bilderstreits und seine Entwicklung bis in die 40er Jahre des 8. Jahrhunderts*. Munich.

Whittow, M. 1996. *The making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*. London.

Winkelmann, F. 1980. *Die östlichen Kirchen in der Epoche der christologischen Auseinandersetzung (5.-7. Jahrhundert)*. Berlin.

———. 1987. *Quellenstudien zur herrschenden Klasse von Byzanz im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert*. Berlin.

John F. Haldon

John F. Haldon is Professor of History and Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. His research focuses on the history of the early and middle Byzantine empire; on state systems and structures across the European and Islamic worlds from late ancient to early modern times; and on the production, distribution, and consumption of resources in the late ancient and medieval world, especially in the context of warfare.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The Germanic Successor States

Ian Wood

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies, Social and Economic History

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0018

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the Germanic successor states of the Roman Empire, explaining that it remains unclear whether the Roman territories were conquered or handed over to the German barbarians because the German tribes were not numerous enough to have overthrown the Empire militarily. It suggests that the overall image of the successor kingdoms is one of a run-down version of the late Empire and on a much reduced scale. The chapter also highlights the fact that while the Germanic incomers brought new vitality to the western provinces, it is hard to find much that can be genuinely described as Germanic.

Keywords: Germanic successor states, Roman Empire, successor kingdoms, Roman territories, German tribes

In the year 400 CE the frontiers of the Roman empire were much as they had been for centuries. By 500, however, North Africa was in the hands of the Vandals; Spain and southwest Gaul under the Visigoths: there was a Burgundian kingdom in southeast Gaul and a Frankish kingdom further north. Italy was in the hands of the Ostrogoths, while Britain was being fought over by the residue of the Romano-British population and Germanic incomers. The Byzantine empire reconquered Africa in 533, Italy between 535 and 553, and a large part of the Mediterranean coast of Spain in circa 551, while the Franks drove the Visigoths out of most of the Gallic territories after 507 and destroyed the Burgundian kingdom in circa 534. By 600 the Lombards had seized much of northern and central Italy from the Byzantines, while a number of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had emerged in eastern and central England. A century later North Africa had fallen to the forces of Islam, and much of Spain would follow suit after 711. In 774 the Franks took over most of the Lombard kingdom. By the end of the eighth century the Frankish empire, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and Christian states of northern Spain can scarcely be called

The Germanic Successor States

“successor states” of the Roman empire: they are better seen as the forerunners of the great kingdoms of the Middle Ages.

The Establishment and Nature of the “Barbarian” Kingdoms

The nature of the states that took over the territory of western Europe and North Africa in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries has been a matter of debate since the advent of modern historical scholarship in the eighteenth century. (p. 499) Much depends on how the takeover is understood: Did the barbarian incomers conquer the territory, or was it conceded to them? Both interpretations have had strong advocates—though increasingly the case against conquest has strengthened, not least because the barbarians are no longer thought to have been numerous enough to have overthrown the empire militarily. Modern estimates of the numbers of incomers vary, but few would see the largest tribes as comprising more than or even as many as 80,000, which is a number that appears in some sources—and which even there usually includes hangers-on who had attached themselves to the immigrant groups. For some tribes the numbers must have been much lower (Goffart 1980, 3–39; Wood 1998; see Map 17.1).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 17.1 The Early Medieval Successor States around 525 CE.

Certainly the Vandals fought to establish themselves in Africa, though their control of the territory was subsequently recognized by treaty, first in 435 and second in 442 (Courtois 1955, 155–85; Schwarcz 2004). The military element was less significant in the establishment of other states. When the Visigoths

were admitted into the Roman empire in 376, it was no doubt assumed that they would act as Roman federates. As it so happened, mistreatment at the hands of those charged with organizing their reception led them to rebel against the empire. Subsequently they marched through the Balkans and Italy, but, having sacked Rome in 410 when their leader, Alaric I, lost patience with the imperial government, they were finally settled in Aquitaine in 418 or 419 (Wood 1998, 532). The Ostrogoths, who also retained their identity as a separate people, were sent to Italy in 489 as imperial agents to challenge Odoacer, who had deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, thirteen years earlier (Moorhead 1992, 11–31). The Ostrogothic leader, Theodoric, gained the upper hand in a series of encounters in the Po basin, ultimately confining Odoacer to the city of Ravenna, which fell after a siege of four years. The Burgundians may have been rather different, in that they were savaged by the Huns in the mid-430s, apparently at the behest of the Roman general Aetius. What remained of them, which may have been little

more than the military following of their leading family, was officially placed in Sapaudia, a region that certainly included territory to the north of Geneva, in circa 443 (Favrod 1997, 100–117; Kaiser 2004, 38–46). Different again were the Franks, who included peoples that had been settled inside the empire since the late third century, probably with major obligations in frontier defense (James 1988, 34–77). Their kings were certainly fighting alongside Roman generals in the mid-fifth century (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.18). Clovis's position was recognized by the emperor in 508 (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.38), while Provence appears to have been ceded to the Franks by Justinian in the 530s (Wood 2008, 341–342). Only in Britain does settlement not seem to have been officially sanctioned by the empire, but as in northern Gaul, there had been Germanic troops in the region for a long period (Orton, Wood, and Lees 2007, 113–114). Moreover, even after the supposed end of Roman rule in the island, the remaining provincial government that maintained some sort of authority up to the middle of the fifth century seems to have decided to recruit federate troops from the Germanic peoples from just beyond the Rhine frontier, much as the emperors had done for centuries (Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum* 23). Further, the Byzantines were perfectly willing to countenance the (p. 500) (p. 501) official transfer of Britain to the Goths in the mid-sixth century (Procopius, *Wars* 6.6.28)! Nowhere, except possibly in Africa, was there a straightforward act of conquest. On the other hand, once officially established on Roman soil, most barbarian groups—certainly some, if not all, who were successful for any length of time—expanded into territory that had not been granted to them. Thus the Visigoths moved beyond Aquitaine into Provence and Spain and the Burgundians took over the Rhône valley. And while there may have been little in the way of deliberate destruction, it is likely that the extended period of disruption itself led to a decline in living standards.

Although we have dates for settlement and for other forms of official recognition, it is not always clear what was at stake: were the barbarians given land, or were they granted tax revenues, and merely billeted on the population or kept in barracks (Goffart 1980)? Unfortunately the evidence for the grants is laconic in the extreme, being contained for the most part in one-line annual entries (Wood 1998, 523–524). These have to be fleshed out largely through the examination of legal texts, most of which relate to the situation several decades after the original concession. It is possible that in some cases tax concessions were originally what was granted, though where, in that situation, the barbarians were housed remains an open question. What is clear is that within a few decades the barbarians were settled on estates. The fact that little or no opposition was recorded, except in Vandal Africa, has been held to be one indication that tax income rather than land was initially granted. Yet there are other possible explanations: fiscal land may have been used, as may *agri deserti* (land that is no longer being cultivated) or the estates of opponents of the imperial regime—this may have been enough to provide for the incomers if their numbers were small. And some may have thought that the settlement of barbarians on their estates was a form of insurance, ensuring that they could retain their other property intact: this at least is implied by Paulinus of Pella in the

The Germanic Successor States

Eucharisticos. Moreover, there are indications that not everyone in Gaul, Spain, and Italy was happy with the presence of barbarians.

The settlements only developed into kingdoms over a period of time. Vandal Africa can admittedly be seen as a kingdom more or less straight after the treaties of 435 and 442, as can Ostrogothic Italy after the destruction of Odoacer in 493, but this latter event already postdates the deposition of Romulus Augustulus. It is unclear when the Visigoths thought of themselves as part of a non-Roman state: many historians would see Euric (466–84) as the first king to regard himself as not being subordinate to the empire. The Burgundians, on the other hand, would seem never to have thought of their kingdom as being independent: Gundobad (d. 516) and Sigismund (d. 523) both valued their Roman titles (Wood 2003, 254–256). Indeed, no early king seems to have wanted to dissociate himself entirely from the empire, and most were keen to secure imperial recognition. This was particularly true of Odoacer and of the Ostrogothic kings who ruled Italy after his overthrow (Jones 1962). Most of the successor states presented themselves as associated with the empire, or at least as continuing its traditions. Even the Vandals were keen to marry into the Theodosian dynasty (Wood 2006, 60). Throughout the sixth century, the kings of the newly formed states turned to imperial ceremonial and title to enhance their rule—not surprisingly, given the fact that in most cases the barbarians had been regarded as federates or potential federates. The Visigothic king Leovigild used Roman-style regalia (Isidore, *Historia Gothorum* 51), while his son Reccared subscribed to the canons of the Third Council of Toledo as Flavius, a title that the Ostrogoth Theodoric had previously taken and that was subsequently adopted by Lombard rulers (Wolfram 1967, 54–55). However, even the Vandals, who cannot be seen as Roman agents in any way, aped imperial traditions.

Germanic Kingdoms

This raises the question of the extent to which these early states can be called “Germanic.” Here there is a problem of the weight of past perceptions, which saw the kings of the successor states as continuing traditions noted in Caesar’s *Wars* or in Tacitus’s *Germania*, or inferred from later literary works such as *Beowulf* or the Scandinavian sagas. Caesar and Tacitus are scarcely useful in this context: Germanic leadership had changed radically in the period before the barbarian migrations. If the Germanic tribes brought any traditions with them, it will have been those in existence immediately before their migration, by which time most of the tribes had long been absorbing Roman influence. Unfortunately even our best source for the barbarians of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus, tells us next to nothing about kingship among the premigration peoples. In any case there is little reason to think that the structures in place immediately before the migration survived the ensuing dislocation intact—except perhaps attitudes toward military service. Gothic kings before 376 may de facto have had more authority in times of crisis than of peace, though this is by no means certain

The Germanic Successor States

(Heather 1991, 99–107). The sustained crisis of a long period of migration must have altered whatever power structures there were, and this must also have held true for the Vandals. Burgundian kingship would seem to be very little other than Roman office-holding (Wood 2003, 254–256). As for the Franks, the fact that many of them were descendants of people long settled in the imperial provinces of *Belgica* and *Germania* means that their traditions were at least in part those of long-term Roman federates (Geary 1988, 78–82). Anglo-Saxon kingship might have drawn more on Germanic tradition (Wallace-Hadrill 1971, 21–26), but again the act of migration, and especially of maritime migration, which would have limited the size of the individual groups entering Britain (Jones 1996, 72–107), is likely to mean that it was largely developed inside what had been imperial territory (Wood 1997).

Essentially the same point can be made of royal succession. Historians have argued that the so-called tanistry of the Vandals, that is, the succession in turn of all the sons of a king, and the succession patterns of the Merovingians, which involved the division of the Frankish kingdom among the recognized heirs of a (p. 503) dead ruler, represent Germanic tradition. There is, however, nothing to suggest that Gaiseric's wish that each of his sons should inherit in turn was anything other than an experiment to ensure that the new kingdom was led by adults rather than minors (Wood 2006, 59–61). So too, the division of the Frankish kingdom between all the recognized surviving sons of a king can be shown quite clearly not to reflect ancient Frankish tradition: we hear of royal brothers in the late fifth or early sixth centuries. Rather the Merovingian divisions, which did in fact become something of a tradition in the course of the sixth century, would seem to have originated in precise political circumstances in 511, when Clovis died leaving an adult son, born of a concubine, and three very much younger boys born of his surviving queen (Wood 1977). Indeed, what is striking about royal succession in the successor states is quite how inventive it was: far from representing Germanic tradition, it would appear to reflect hard-headed responses of particular elites to the question of how best to ensure their own survival and the related survival of their kingdoms (Wood 2006).

This reading raises a very considerable question as to the extent to which these successor states were self-consciously Germanic, which was long taken for granted within certain historiographical traditions—though there have been doubters since at least the early eighteenth century. The great histories of the early Middle Ages were seen as “national”: Jordanes wrote a *Getica*, Isidore a *History of the Goths, Vandals and Sueves*, Bede a *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, and Paul the Deacon a *History of the Lombards*, while Gregory of Tours was thought to have written a *History of the Franks* (Goffart 1988). In fact, Gregory wrote no such thing: his own title for the work appears to have been *Decem Libri Historiarum*, that is, *Ten Books of Histories* (Goffart 1987). And while Bede did write about the *Angli*, his history was ecclesiastical and not national. Isidore's history, while claiming to be national history, sets the Goths firmly within a Biblical pattern, very different from the past presented by Jordanes, which included the Visigoths as well as the Ostrogoths. It was essentially the images presented by Jordanes and Paul, who applied the Gothic historian's model to the Lombards, that led scholars to infer that the successor states saw themselves within a Germanic historical framework. It is,

The Germanic Successor States

however, clear that this is to misunderstand Jordanes. It is possible that he had access to some Gothic traditions: he talks of old songs (Jordanes, *Getica* 28, 43, 72). Even if one takes this statement at face value, however, his account of Gothic history can still be shown to be essentially a Roman construct, created for Theodoric the Great, and perhaps even more for the Roman senatorial aristocracy of his day, by Cassiodorus (Christensen 2002). Unfortunately Cassiodorus's history does not survive, and it is not clear how well it is represented by Jordanes—who claims to have seen it for a mere three days. What is clear, however, is that Cassiodorus was intent on promoting the Amal dynasty of Theodoric, and that he manipulated and fabricated evidence to give it a glorious past. Moreover, in order to fill out the detail of that past he turned to earlier historians, taking from them information relating to peoples other than the Goths. Jordanes would also seem to have turned to such works so as to bolster what he could remember of Cassiodorus's history. In other words, the chief exhibit in support of the idea that the Germanic leaders of (p. 504) the successor states had a sense of a Germanic past turns out to be a propagandist work created by a Roman senator, dependent largely on earlier Roman histories. That the Ostrogoths themselves quickly abandoned Amal rule, when it failed them in the wars against the Byzantines, suggests that the vision created by Cassiodorus for Theodoric, his family, and the Roman aristocracy was not universally shared by the Ostrogoths. And the fact that Isidore's view of Gothic origins differs totally from that of Jordanes suggests that there was no commonly shared sense of the past among the Goths—though individual families (like that of Jordanes himself) may well have preserved their own narratives.

While there is little or nothing to suggest that the successor states had any sense of a Germanic past, there are indications that tribal groups could have a long-term sense of identity: there are tribes that disappear only to reemerge some generations later (Heather 1998). Some Gothic groups, for instance, were swallowed up into Attila's empire, only to reappear after the Battle of the Nedao in 454 that delivered the coup de grace to Hunnic power. The evidence is perhaps clearest for a group of Saxons, who decided to join the Lombards at the time of their entry into Italy, but who then reacted against assimilation into the Lombard kingdom and attempted to return to what they regarded as their ancestral lands, only to find that they had been taken over by Suevi (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 4.42, 5.15; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* 3.5–7). Small groups could, thus, become attached to larger groups, and then later reassert their independence, which must indicate a separate sense of identity. Equally, peoples like the Burgundians could maintain some sense of identity even after conquest by the Franks—giving their name to a region and a Frankish subkingdom (Ewig 1976, 255–259). There is, however, nothing to prove that the Rhone valley kingdom of the Burgundians played any role in the transmission of the story of the defeat of the people when they had been settled in the region of the Middle Rhine—the historical event around which the *Nibelungenlied* would be developed. More remarkably, names could become associated with regions long after a people had passed through: the region of

The Germanic Successor States

Andalusia, for instance, commemorates the Vandals, emerging generations after they had moved on to Africa, and indeed after the destruction of their African kingdom.

Roman Continuities

The successor states, then, drew little from the premigration past of the peoples who came to provide their ruling families. Rather, they emerged on Roman soil, and it was Roman rather than Germanic structures on which they were based. Their political organization was primarily Roman, based for the most part on provincial administration, although in Italy, where the western imperial court had been based, the Ostrogoths had access to surviving offices of what had been the (p. 505) central administration. Thus, Cassiodorus's *Variae* provides a priceless insight not just into the governmental procedures under Theodoric but also into those of the last Roman emperors of the West.

Cassiodorus shows us the main offices of state of the last emperors still functioning. He himself was *quaestor* and *magister officiorum*. His *Variae* provides model letters of appointment to other offices and describes their function. In appearance Theodoric's court—or at least the nonmilitary aspect of it—was similar to that of the last Theodosian emperors, only his writ did not run as far—though he would dearly have liked it to. For other courts of the barbarian west we have no such documentation—the surviving letter collections come from men who were not usually present at court, although they do occasionally offer insights into what was going on (Shanzer and Wood 2002, 141–153). The narrative sources also shed some light on the activities of individual officials—referendaries and counts of the palace. Such offices probably grew out of late Roman administrative posts, associated with the provincial administration (Barnwell 1992; 1997), but their duties steadily changed—not least because of their reduced administrative responsibilities, resulting from factors such as the decline of the tax system. Except in Italy, which had been the seat of imperial government in the last century of the western empire, kings and their officials essentially replaced the diocesan and provincial government. The empire itself, of course, effectively vanished in the west, despite the continuity of many of its offices in the Ostrogothic kingdom and despite the reconquest of Italy, Africa, and parts of Spain by Justinian. The next tier down of government, however, would seem initially to have survived.

An equivalent continuity can be seen a little lower down the chain of command, in the *civitates*. Here the secular official was the local *comes*—or sometimes a pair of them: in the Burgundian kingdom there were Roman and Burgundian *comites*, who may have been in post at the same time (Favrod 1997, 172–179). The office of *comes* had its origins in the later empire. In the successor states he (or they) would be responsible for the local military organization and the administration of justice—though in the latter field the bishop could also be influential (Heinzelmann 1976). In general bishops seem gradually to have taken over more of the functions of the *comes*, though detailed studies of individual cities have suggested that the speed of change depended very much on the energy of individuals (Durliat 1979). In some places episcopal power (*Bischofsherrschaft*) was quite

The Germanic Successor States

well established by the end of the sixth century: in other places the *comes* continued to be a dominant figure.

The fates of the local *curiae*, at one level below the bishop and the *comes*, seem to have been equally varied—though there was probably considerable variety in their local importance and authority even in the Roman period. They still make an occasional appearance in the collections of formulas that survive from Merovingian and Carolingian Francia (Wood 1990, 64–65). Equally important, these provide us with the best evidence that we have for municipal archives in the post-Roman period, and, indeed, by implication they shed light on the *gesta municipalia* of the empire. We see the need for registration of gifts, purchases, and the like. But again (p. 506) it is unclear how long and how generally the system continued to operate: they only make an appearance in some collections of formulas, and even then it is not always clear whether the documents that mention them reflected their continuing existence at the time that a particular *Formulary* was put together, or whether they are no more than archaic survivals. At best one can conclude that some features of local government survived from the Roman period but that they vanished, at different rates in different places, in the ensuing centuries.

We are better placed to understand the changing legal arrangements of the post-Roman period. Again the issue of Roman versus Germanic has bedeviled scholarship. The Roman Law of the Theodosian Code, or as represented in the abridged form of the Breviary of Alaric (506) or the *Forma et Expositio Legum* (which would seem to have been the original title of the so-called *Lex Romana Burgundionum*; ca. 500), continued to be in force for most of the people who saw themselves as Roman and more generally for churchmen. The Justinianic Code was only introduced into Italy following the Byzantine Reconquest, being compiled after the establishment of most of the successor states. The one place where Roman law was completely abrogated was in Visigothic Spain, where the *Liber Iudiciorum* of Recceswinth (654) was applied to everyone (*Lex Visigothorum* 2.1.5)—although as the most romanized of all the law codes (except for those, like the Breviary of Alaric or the Edict of Theodoric, which largely restated Roman law), this may not have caused much hardship. Elsewhere, while Roman law was still in force for part of the population, a variety of other codes were also valid. Here the so-called system of the personality of the law was in place. This system is most clearly described in the early seventh-century *Lex Ribvaria* of the eastern Franks. What it entailed was the notion that a Frank was subject to Frankish law, a Burgundian to Burgundian law, and so forth. It would appear that, in the early seventh century at least, an individual's ethnicity was defined by his or her place of birth, rather than biologically (*Lex Ribvaria* 35.5).

The problem of the concurrence of a number of different legal codes was highlighted in the ninth century by the bishop of Lyon, Agobard, who envisaged a dispute involving five men, each claiming to be subject to a different legal code (*Adversus legem Gundobadi* 4). In all probability such disputes were rare, certainly before the Carolingian period. The Frankish conquest of Italy may have led to the need to balance different law codes, but for earlier periods Agobard's imagined dispute seems to present a theoretical problem rather than something that occurred regularly. Frankish laws of the sixth century reveal a

The Germanic Successor States

very localized legal world, where problems were normally sorted out in the village, but if either of the parties was recalcitrant they would be referred to a higher court, presided over by *rachymburgi* and the count (*Pactus Legis Salicae* 73: Wood 1986, 10–11; *Edictum Chilperici*: Fouracre 1986, 39–41). In all probability ethnic identity did not matter in such cases. In the cities there would have been more likelihood that different codes might be brought into play. At a higher level still, at the king's court, it is probable that the king's own decision superseded that of any law-book.

(p. 507) There is, however, an additional question as to how much the law codes of the successor states reflect specifically Germanic legal tradition. The idea of a written code itself was clearly derived from Roman practice (Wormald 1977, 106–107). Thus all the codes, even those written in Old English, look back to Roman models—essentially the model of the *Codex Theodosianus*. Within the codes there are individual laws that were definitely regarded as traditional among certain sections of the “Germanic” population: this is clearly stated in the context of the famous *Lex Gundobada*, the law reintroducing trial by battle among the Burgundians, because they had been treating oaths with scant respect (*Liber Constitutionum* 45: Wood 1986, 16–17). One might question the extent to which ordeal by battle was a Germanic rather than a more generally military tradition. Nevertheless, it had previously been in force among the Burgundians. On the other hand, the oath that was being supplanted by the revival of trial by battle is presented as something novel, despite the fact that oath-taking has sometimes been seen as Germanic rather than Roman. In fact there is no reason to see oath-taking (Wood 1986, 15–16), or indeed forms of ordeal other than trial by battle, as having originated among the Germanic population. Rather, they seem to have developed among the Roman, and perhaps more specifically among the Christian Roman population—models for the ordeal can be found in the Bible, in martyr acts, and in theological dispute. The origins of some legal practices to be found in the “Germanic” codes are rather harder to unravel—for instance, patterns of inheritance or traditions of compensation for injury. Even so, although some individual legal practices may have originated among the Germanic population, a significant proportion of the law of the successor states would appear to have originated in Late Roman Vulgar law, or in provincial laws, which had been in force alongside the imperial legislation most clearly represented by the codes of Theodosius II and Justinian. Indeed, just as the *Variae* of Cassiodorus and the Merovingian Formularies may give us our fullest insight into the workings of imperial and provincial government in the last century of imperial rule, so too the “Germanic” law codes may contain the majority of provincial law that survives from the late Roman period.

The Organization of the Military and Taxation

A clearer departure from imperial practice may be found in systems of military organization. Essentially, the Roman army had been a standing army, paid for by taxes—although the employment of Germanic federates had increasingly changed the

The Germanic Successor States

complexion of the armed forces. In contrast the successor states did not have a standing army—which was one of the factors which meant that taxation was a matter of very much less concern to the government than it had been in the imperial (p. 508) period. Indeed, taxation seems gradually to have fallen into disuse, but at different speeds in different places (Goffart 1982; Wickham 2005, 80–124), depending on official zeal and local opposition, which was led on occasion by the bishop (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 4.2, 9.30). Certain taxes, especially those on the transport of goods, clearly did survive, while land and head tax declined. Crucially, however, income from taxation was not a major resource for the kings of the successor states.

Whether the Roman army was instantly disbanded is an open question, although it is unlikely that such a resource was allowed to vanish overnight. At all costs, by the eighth century the armies of the barbarian west were largely made up of men who owed military obligations for the land they held, or who were performing military service for their landlords. Whereas the Romans had separated soldier from civilian, the successor states reunited the two: males of any significant status were expected to be militarily active. Control of land, rather than the levying of taxes, was thus the fundamental resource of the rulers of the successor states. The shift from a tax-paying society defended by a standing army to a society in which military requirements were covered by a system of military obligations has been seen as a fundamental feature of the transition from the Roman empire to the early Middle Ages (Wickham 1984).

There were several elements in the armies of the successor states, to judge from the Frankish sources, which constitute the majority of our evidence. First, the king had his own following, his *trustis* or group of *antrustiones*—men who performed military service in return for reward, whether of treasure or land (Halsall 2003, 48). In Anglo-Saxon England it would appear that the offer of land was crucial in determining whether a man was tied to his lord on a temporary basis or for the rest of his active life (Abels 1988, 11–42). It was probably not only kings who had personal military followings: aristocrats could certainly call upon retainers—who, it would seem, were expected to perform military service. Personal followings, however, were not the only military forces active under the successor states. In Francia, at least, individual cities could be called on by the count to supply a militia in times of crisis (Halsall 2003, 48). Moreover, the Merovingian civil wars of the sixth century provided plenty of opportunity to gather a local force to attack a neighboring city within the territory of another king (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 7.2). How far from home these militias could operate is unclear. Nor is it apparent how long they survived. By the Carolingian period counts were expected to lead forces levied in their *civitates* on national expeditions (Bachrach 2001, 57–58). It is not certain, however, that these Carolingian levies were descended in any way from the *civitas* militias of the sixth century.

The post-Roman period has been seen as an age of militarization, in which the boundary between civilian and soldier was eroded, and when society as a whole came to be bound by military obligations. Certainly the erosion of a distinction between soldier and civilian was an important development, though legislation in the Theodosian Code, together with

The Germanic Successor States

some narrative accounts, suggests that Roman aristocrats of the late fourth and fifth centuries could also raise their own military (p. 509) followings, and indeed might be expected to do so (Wood 2007, 234). Probably these were made up primarily of tenants, but some of those tenants would seem to have been more militarily capable than one might have expected from a group of rapidly armed laborers. Civil wars and the barbarian invasions meant that even regions well inside the frontier zone frequently saw military action during the late fourth and early fifth centuries. After the end of the western empire, every successor state had potentially hostile neighbors, meaning that almost everyone lived in or relatively close to a frontier region. The arrival of Germanic incomers, who expected to fight, and the fact that landowners came to be subject to military obligations, removed any clear distinction between soldier and civilian. And there was also the institution of the *Campus Martius* or March Field, the annual gathering of the army, which came to take place on the first of May—though the term is of course firmly Roman. It is attested among the Franks in the sixth century and among the Lombards in the eighth. One should, however, be wary of making too much of the March Field before the Carolingian period, when it is properly attested as being annual. Earlier references are few and far between (Wood 2007, 234–235). They certainly do not allow us to conclude that the kings of the successor states automatically summoned their forces every year—though it may be that some did, especially those most exposed to the dangers of attack from outside: for instance, the eastern Frankish kingdom of Austrasia. The evidence, which is admittedly very patchy, can be read as suggesting that society became more militarized in the eighth century, after an initial erosion of the distinction between soldier and civilian in the fifth.

Courts and Church

And yet, from the point of view of members of the Germanic aristocracy it was possible to see developments as leading away from the traditions of the war band. Not all Ostrogothic nobles were happy with the upbringing of Theodoric's grandson, Athalaric (Procopius *Wars* 5.2.1–20), nor with the decadent lifestyle of Theodohad, Theodoric's son-in-law, who was king at the time of the outbreak of Justinian's reconquest of Italy (Procopius, *Wars* 5.11.1). Despite occasional indications of alienation from court life, the royal court was frequently the focal point of the successor states, especially in the fifth, sixth, and early seventh centuries. Aristocrats and others were attracted to the court not least because of royal patronage and the hope of office. In seventh-century Francia we can see, from the evidence of the letter collection of Desiderius of Cahors, how talented young men were attracted to the royal court, and then subsequently were sent out to the provinces as secular officials or high-ranking ecclesiastics (Rosenwein 2006, 135–142). Given the importance of the ear of the king, it is not surprising that access to the royal court was a bone of contention, and that one factor that alienated a substantial aristocratic (p. 510) faction in Francia in the 660s was Ebroin's exclusion of his opponents from court (*Passio Leodegarii* 1.5). Prior to Ebroin's period of dominance, it would seem

The Germanic Successor States

that political life was focused on the royal court, which despite being a potentially dangerous place was nevertheless a magnet for any ambitious individual. From the late seventh century, however, there appears to have been a growing regionalization of politics, with opponents of the regime preferring to retreat to their own estates.

It was not only in Francia that the royal court played a central role in the kingdom. The evidence is equally strong for the fifth- and early sixth-century Vandal, Gothic, and Burgundian kingdoms. These courts were cultural as well as political centers (Hen 2007). The same is true for the Lombard kingdom in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the Lombard case, indeed, this was true of not just the royal court but also the effectively independent duchy of Benevento (Belting 1962). Much of the evidence comes from the continuing traditions of letter writing, but there is also substantial evidence for royal and aristocratic patronage of poetry and art. As a result, while these courts produced nothing that can really be compared with the buildings of Constantine in the fourth century or those of Justinian in sixth-century Byzantium, the successor states were not cultural deserts. Philosophy was admittedly in decline, despite the contribution of Boethius: theology did not reach the heights that it had attained in the age of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine—though Gregory the Great’s contribution was significant. But even if the theological achievements of the sixth and seventh centuries compare badly with those of the fourth and fifth, theology continued to be a matter of major interest, as we can see in the case of the sixth-century Merovingian Chilperic I (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 5.44). The seventh century marked a golden age in religious writing among the Visigoths in Spain (Fontaine 1983).

While the intellectual achievements of the sixth- and seventh-century Church perhaps failed to come up to those of the fourth and fifth centuries, in other respects the period of the successor states was arguably one of significant ecclesiastical development. For all Constantine’s benefactions, Christianity did not become the official religion of the empire until the late fourth century, by which time the period of Germanic migration was already underway. Nor had a career in the Church become as attractive for the aristocracy as the old sequence of high administrative offices known as the *cursus honorum*. The fifth century brought both problems and opportunities for the Church. Not all the incoming barbarian groups had converted to Christianity—most indeed converted in the course of their entry into the empire. When they did convert, the majority turned in the first instance to Arianism rather than Catholicism. Further, despite the famed protection of ecclesiastical property during the sack of Rome in 410, the Church surely lost land and treasure in the course of the arrival and settlement of the incoming barbarians. However, the crisis also provided opportunity: churchmen stepped into the breach, helping to organize relief for stricken cities (Klingshirn 1985; Shanzer 1998, 225–232). With the collapse of the western empire, the secular career structure that had attracted the aristocracy for centuries came to an end: a career in the Church became a plausible alternative. In the course of the fifth century an increasing number of aristocrats (p. 511) became bishops (Mathisen 1993, 89–104). By the time that the successor states were established the episcopate was largely dominated by descendants of the late Roman aristocracy. It would be another century before a significant proportion of bishops was of

The Germanic Successor States

Germanic extraction. As the incomers turned from Arianism or Paganism to Catholicism, the episcopate was well placed to influence the new rulers. Thus, by the early sixth century in Burgundy and Francia, and the late sixth century in Visigothic Spain, churchmen had as much influence over kings as their predecessors had exercised over emperors at the end of the fourth century. Indeed, they were arguably more influential: there was no secular or non-Christian ideology to compete with that of the Church. The Visigothic kingdom after its conversion to Catholicism in 589 is dominated by the Councils of Toledo (Stocking 2000). The Church councils of the Frankish kingdom are not thought to have been as influential, though they clearly played an important part in the running of the kingdom. On the other hand, Francia boasts a string of episcopal saints who intervened in politics, and indeed some of them were martyred as a result (Fouracre 1990). Only the Lombard kingdom seems less influenced by the clergy—perhaps in part because it hesitated between Arianism and Catholicism over a longer period of time, in part because it was more directly caught up in the problems of the theological rift caused by Justinian's meddling in theological affairs (known as the Tri-Capitoline schism) than was Francia or the Visigothic kingdom, and perhaps also because the hostility of the Papacy to the Lombards rather inhibited the influence of the Church (Chazelle and Cubitt 2006).

The centrality of the Church to the successor states can be measured not just in the influence of bishops but also in the spread of monasticism and more generally in the transfer of property into the hands of the Church. The history of western monasticism is usually seen as beginning with Martin's foundations at Ligugé, near Poitiers, and at Tours in the late fourth century. These were followed by a series of foundations in Provence, notably on the island of Lérins at Marseille in the early fifth century (Prinz 1988). Major developments in Italy were initiated by the Rules of the Master and of Benedict in the sixth century (Dunn 2000, 111–137). The vogue for monastic foundation that developed in the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, especially in Francia but also in Spain, and subsequently in Italy and England, was to be hugely influential in the cultural life of the successor states. Monasteries came to play the leading role in education, scholarship, and in the transmission of texts—the vast majority of antique and early medieval texts from western Europe were transmitted via monastic scriptoria (Brown 1994, 39). Monasteries also played a significant role in shaping the spiritual attitudes of the populations of the successor states in the late sixth and seventh centuries. Moreover, however much the monastic ideal emphasized disassociation from the world, monasteries were fully integrated into the religious, political, and social structures of the early medieval kingdoms. Kings and aristocrats founded monasteries, and they transferred vast amounts of property and wealth to their foundations (Wood 1994, 183–184; Wood 1995). They did so for the good of their souls, and also to ensure the continuing commemoration of themselves and their families.

(p. 512) David Herlihy tried to assess the wealth of the Church in the Carolingian period, and concluded that it held about a third of the land of the Christian kingdoms of western Europe (Herlihy 1961, 92). It is generally assumed that this must have been an increase on the amount of property in ecclesiastical hands in the seventh century—but this may

The Germanic Successor States

not have been the case. The eighth century in Francia and in England saw a certain amount of resecularization of property (Fouracre 2000, 123). On the one hand it is impossible to form a clear picture of the extent of Church landholding in the territory of the successor states; on the other hand there are pools of information relating to individual monasteries, above all those of St. Wandrille and St. Denis in northern Francia, which suggest very considerable accumulations of wealth in the course of the seventh century. To this one should also add the evidence for episcopal landholding. Here there are a number of important wills, especially from Francia—of which the most instructive is that of Bertram of Le Mans (Weidemann 1986). Bertram may have been related to the Merovingian royal family, and he certainly benefited from his loyalty to King Chlothar II, but his see was not among the richest or most important of the Frankish kingdom. Nevertheless, it has been calculated that he left territory equivalent to half a modern French *département* in his will, most of it to the Church of Le Mans or other religious institutions (Wood 2007, 228). If he is in any way representative of the bishops of the early seventh century, a third of the Frankish kingdom may already have been in ecclesiastical hands at the time (contra Herlihy 1961, 89). No wonder the Merovingian king Chilperic I (561–584) complained at the accumulation of wealth by the Church (Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 6.46). Probably the Visigothic and Lombard Churches were not as wealthy—and the Anglo-Saxon Church was certainly not in the same league before the eighth century. Even so, it may well be that the Church—as the institution that dominated belief, culture, and possibly even property—was the most significant feature of the successor states on the continent as they developed in the course of the sixth century. At the same time, the Church would seem to have attracted many of the more talented individuals, depriving secular society of potential administrators—something that may well have caused ecclesiastical institutions to flourish to the detriment of their secular counterparts.

Economic Conditions

Land, however, raises a further set of issues of importance, being basic to the economic foundations of any state before the modern period. Estates and agriculture, rather than trade and industry, had been the dominant feature of the economy of the western empire. There had, of course, been state factories, producing military necessities, and mines. There had also been centers of ceramic production. The factories vanished with the empire, and although ceramic production continued, (p. 513) it was largely of lower-quality wares, which were distributed over relatively small areas (Wickham 2005, 700–706; Ward-Perkins 2005, 104–108). Land and its produce was the mainstay of the economy. Kings, aristocrats, and great landowners, like the Church, needed little that they could not produce from their own estates, which might well have been scattered over a large region, thus giving access to a variety of products, including grain, wine, and salt, as well as an assortment of meats, reared and hunted. A major landowner had no need to go to market for any of these staples, though tolls would be paid on them as they

The Germanic Successor States

were moved around the country (Wood 1994, 214–217)—for these were among the taxes that did not decline in the post-Roman period. At this highest level of society the most important trade was in luxury goods, which were still being imported from throughout the Mediterranean world and, in the case of furs, amber, and spices, from even further afield—in the case of the first two from the Baltic and the extreme north, and of the last from India.

Luxury goods would have been beyond the pocket of those lower down the social scale, who would have depended almost entirely on local produce, some of which they would have had to acquire from local markets. The state of the land is, therefore, a crucial issue. How much disruption was caused to property and its cultivation by the barbarian migrations and associated wars? Historians have given radically opposed interpretations of the evidence, which being literary is not amenable to any sort of quantitative analysis. The likelihood is that some regions suffered badly, and others scarcely at all. Moreover, what disruption there was would have occurred in different places at different times. The northeast of Gaul probably suffered most in the early fifth century, when the frontiers were first breached, and then around 451 with the Hunnic onslaught, before the emergence of the successor states. Spain too saw a good deal of fighting in the fifth century, as did southwestern Gaul in the early sixth. Britain apart, Italy—which had to endure the Visigothic devastations that included the sack of Rome in 410, as well as war between Odoacer and Theodoric in the early 490s, the Byzantine Reconquest, and finally the Lombard occupation of the Po Valley and the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento — probably experienced most disruption.

Then there is the problem of assessing the impact of the various plagues of the fifth and sixth centuries, especially that which hit Constantinople in 541 (Procopius, *Wars* 2.22–3) and reached Gaul in 543. Its presence in the parts of the Merovingian kingdom is graphically described by Gregory of Tours (*Decem Libri Historiarum* 4.5). For the most part, historians have made little of the plague, again because its impact is impossible to quantify (Little 2007). Yet, if it was as lethal as the Black Death, as has been suggested, then its economic impact must have been considerable, since it will have wiped out a sizable proportion of the workforce.

What of the workforce itself? Here there is a problem in determining just how much of the land belonged to major landowners who exploited the labor of slaves or (more commonly) tied laborers, and how much was in the hands of minor lords and free peasants. It is clear from narrative sources, above all hagiographical texts, and from the formulas that there were free men who held small amounts of land. Unfortunately they rarely appear in the charters until the eighth century, when the (p. 514) Italian documentation, particularly from Lucca, casts considerable light on them (Wickham 2005, 387–393). The majority of the earlier charter evidence is Frankish, and relates to the major monasteries (Wood 2007, 228). It is, therefore, not directly comparable with that from Italy—but it would seem that minor landowners and free peasants were relatively unimportant, though not unknown, in Francia. As for Spain, the most important

The Germanic Successor States

documents to have survived are slate tablets (Velázquez 1989), though as yet it is unclear whether the society they reveal is one of tenants or free peasants; thus we therefore do not know whether it conforms more to the model reconstructed for Francia or Italy.

It is also unclear whether the peasantry, free and tied, benefited from the arrival of the barbarians and the emergence of the successor states. It is possible to construct a model that assumes that the peasantry profited from the dislocation of the fifth century by escaping from various demands and obligations: it is also possible to hypothesize that new landlords were more brutal than their predecessors. A factor that might have played rather more into the hands of the peasantry is the plague, if one may judge by analogy with the Black Death, when high mortality raised the labor of the rural workforce to a premium.

Unfortunately the lack of any quantitative evidence means that one can do no more than hypothesize. It would seem, however, from the formulas, that there were a good number of people who fell on hard times in the sixth and seventh centuries, and that some resorted to enslaving themselves because they were unable to repay debts (Rio 2009, 228–232). The archaeological evidence generally implies a declining standard of living, and not just for the lower classes. Material culture was impoverished: gone is the age of villa-building: indeed we scarcely know what the rural dwellings of the upper classes looked like. Where town houses have been excavated, they are much poorer and smaller than their Roman predecessors (Ward-Perkins 2005, 87–120). The Church could still build on a grand scale, but even then comparison with the ground plans of churches built in the later empire put their early medieval successors in the shade (Ward-Perkins 2005, 149).

Conclusion

The overall image of the successor kingdoms is, indeed, one of a run-down version of the late empire, and on a much reduced scale—the scale of the provinces rather than of the western empire as a whole. That is not to say that there had been complete collapse. Nor had the Germanic incomers brought new vitality to the western provinces, as some have argued. Indeed it is hard to find much that can be genuinely described as Germanic. Much of what was new (and there were differences in rule, succession, law, and military organization between the empire and the successor states) seems to have been developed in precise contexts. What we are faced with is survival strategies rather than anything imported from Germanic (p. 515) tradition. The other great development concerned the Church, which underpinned the successor states in ways that the likes of the great bishop of Milan Ambrose, who outlived the emperor Theodosius I, can only have dreamt of. Of course it was molded by the political and social structures of the day, but the Church was at least as important as Roman tradition, and infinitely more important than Germanic tradition, in the makeup of the successor states.

References

- Abels, R. P. 1988. *Lordship and military obligation in Anglo-Saxon England*. London.
- Bachrach, B. 2001. *Early Carolingian warfare: Prelude to empire*. Philadelphia.
- Barnwell, P. S. 1992. *Emperor, prefects and kings: The Roman west, 395–565*. London.
- . 1997. *Kings, courtiers and imperium: The barbarian west, 565–725*. London.
- Belting, H. 1962. "Studien zum Beneventanischen Hof im 8. Jahrhundert." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16: 141–193.
- Brown, G. 1994. "Introduction: The Carolingian Renaissance." In R. McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian culture: Emulation and innovation*, 1–51. Cambridge.
- Chazelle, C., and C. Cubitt, eds. *The crisis of the oecumene: The three chapters and the failed quest for unity in the sixth-century Mediterranean*. Turnhout.
- Christensen, A. S. 2002. *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the history of the Goths: Studies in a migration myth*. Copenhagen.
- Courtois, C. 1955. *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*. Paris.
- Dunn, M. 2000. *The emergence of monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*. Oxford.
- Durliat, J. 1979. "Les attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens: L'exemple de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630–655)." *Annales du Midi* 91: 237–254.
- Ewig, E. 1976. "Volkstum und Volksbewusstsein im Frankenreich des 7. Jahrhunderts." In E. Ewig, ed., *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien: Gesammelte Schriften (1952–1973)*, vol. 1, 231–273. Munich.
- Favrod, J. 1997. *Histoire politique du royaume burgonde (443–534)*. Lausanne.
- Fontaine, J. 1983. *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique*. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Paris.
- Fouracre, P. 1986. "'Placita' and the settlement of disputes in later Merovingian Francia." In W. Davies and P. Fouracre, eds., *The settlement of disputes in early medieval Europe*, 23–43. Cambridge.
- . 1990. "Merovingian history and Merovingian hagiography." *Past and Present* 127: 3–38.
- . 2000. *The age of Charles Martel*. London.

The Germanic Successor States

Geary, P. J. 1988. *Before France and Germany: The creation and transformation of the Merovingian world*. Oxford.

Goffart, W. 1980. *Barbarians and Romans A.D. 418-584: The techniques of accommodation*. Princeton, NJ.

———. 1982. "Old and new in Merovingian taxation." *Past and Present* 96: 3-21.

———. 1987. "From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum* and back again: Aspects of the textual history of Gregory of Tours." In T. F. X. Noble and J. J. Contreni, eds., *Religion, culture, and society in the early Middle Ages: Studies in honour of Richard E. Sullivan*, 55-76. Kalamazoo, MI. (p. 516)

———. 1988. *The narrators of barbarian history (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*. Princeton, NJ.

Halsall, G. 2003. *Warfare and society in the barbarian west, 450-900*. London.

Heather, P. 1991. *Goths and Romans 332-489*. Oxford.

———. 1998. "Disappearing and reappearing tribes." In W. Pohl and H. Reimitz, eds. *Strategies of distinction: The construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden), 95-111.

Heinzelmann, M. 1976. *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien*. Munich, 1976.

Hen, Y. 2007. *Roman barbarians: The royal court and culture in the early medieval West*. London.

Herlihy, D. 1961. "Church property on the European continent, 701-1200." *Speculum* 36: 81-105.

James, E. 1988. *The Franks*. Oxford.

Jones, A. H. M. 1962. "The constitutional position of Odoacer and Theoderic." *Journal of Roman Studies* 52: 126-130.

Jones, M. E. 1996. *The end of Roman Britain*. Ithaca, NY.

Kaiser, R. 2004. *Die Burgunder*. Stuttgart.

Klingshirn, W. 1985. "Charity and power: Caesarius of Arles and the ransoming of captives in sub-Roman Gaul." *Journal of Roman Studies* 75: 183-203.

Little, L. K., ed. 2007. *Plague and the end of antiquity: The pandemic of 541-750*. Cambridge.

Mathisen, R. W. 1993. *Roman aristocrats in barbarian Gaul: Strategies for survival in an age of transition*. Austin, TX.

Moorhead, J. 1992. *Theodoric in Italy*. Oxford.

Orton, F., I. Wood, and C. Lees. 2007. *Fragments of history: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments*. Manchester.

Prinz, F. 1988. *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*. 2nd ed. Munich.

Rio, A. 2009. *Legal practice and the written word in the early Middle Ages: Frankish formulas, c. 500-1000*. Cambridge.

Rosenwein, B. H. 2006. *Emotional communities in the early Middle Ages*, 135-142. Ithaca, NY.

Schwarcz, A. 2004. "The settlement of the Vandals in North Africa." In A. Merrills, ed., *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New perspectives on late antique North Africa*, 49-57. Aldershot.

Shanzer, D. 1998. "Two clocks and a wedding: Theodoric's diplomatic relations with the barbarians." *Romanobarbarica* 14: 225-258.

Shanzer, D., and I. N. Wood. 2002. *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and selected prose*. Liverpool.

Stocking, R. L. 2000. *Bishops, councils, and consensus in the Visigothic kingdom, 589-633*. Ann Arbor, MI.

Velázquez, I. 1989. *Las pizarras visigodas*. Rome.

Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. 1971. *Early Germanic kingship in England and on the continent*. Oxford.

Ward-Perkins, B. 2005. *The fall of Rome and the end of civilization*. Oxford.

Weidemann, M. 1986. *Das Testament des Bischofs Berthramn von Le Mans vom 27. März 616: Untersuchungen zu Besitz und Geschichte einer fränkischen Familie im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert*. Mainz.

Wickham, C. 2005. *Framing the early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800*. Oxford. (p. 517)

Wickham, C. J. 1984. "The other transition: From the ancient world to feudalism." *Past and Present* 103: 3-36.

Wolfram, H. 1967. *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*. Vienna.

Wood, I. N. 1977. "Kings, kingdoms and consent." In P. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, eds., *Early medieval kingship*, 6-29. Leeds.

The Germanic Successor States

———. 1986. "Disputes in late fifth- and sixth-century Gaul: Some problems." In W. Davies and P. Fouracre, eds., *The settlement of disputes in early medieval Europe*, 7–22. Cambridge.

———. 1990. "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul." In R. McKitterick, ed., *The uses of literacy in early medieval Europe*, 63–81. Cambridge.

———. 1994. *The Merovingian kingdoms, 450–751*. London.

———. 1995. *The most holy Abbot Ceolfrid*. Jarrow.

———. 1997. "Before and after the migration to Britain." In J. Hines, ed., *The Anglo-Saxons from the migration period to the eighth century*, 41–54. Woodbridge.

———. 1998. "The barbarian invasions and first settlements." In A. Cameron and P. Garnsey, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. 13, The Late empire, A.D. 337–425, 516–537*. Cambridge.

———. 2003. "Gentes, kings and kingdoms—the emergence of states: The kingdom of the Gibichungs." In H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut, and W. Pohl, eds., *Regna and gentes: the relationship between late antique and early medieval peoples and kingdoms in the transformation of the Roman world*, 243–269. Leiden.

———. 2006. "Royal succession and legitimation in the Roman west, 419–536." In S. Airlie, W. Pohl, and H. Reimitz, eds., *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, 59–72. Vienna.

———. 2007. "Landscapes compared." *Early Medieval Europe* 15: 223–237.

———. 2008. "The fall of the Roman empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." In S. Barton and P. Linehan, eds., *Cross, crescent and conversion: Studies on medieval Spain and Christendom in memory of Richard Fletcher*, 327–347. Leiden.

Wormald, P. 1977. "Lex scripta and verbum regis: Legislation and Germanic kingship from Euric to Cnut." In P. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, eds., *Early medieval kingship*, 105–138. Leeds.

Ian Wood

Ian Wood is Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Leeds. His chief research interests are the post-Roman period, the Christianization of Western and Central Europe, Anglo-Saxon England in the Age of Bede, and eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century interpretations of the Fall of Rome.



Oxford Handbooks Online

The First Islamic Empire

Chase F. Robinson

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and
Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013

Subject: Classical Studies, Middle Eastern Languages and Culture, Classical Religions and
Mythologies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188318.013.0019

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the history of the establishment of the first Islamic Empire. It explains that the Arab Muslims took control of a culturally and religiously heterogeneous and geographically diverse area of Eurasia, from Iberia and North Africa in the west to Transoxiana and Sind in the east. The chapter highlights the role of religion in the formation of the Islamic state given that most Muslims believed that the conquests which preceded it were part of God's providential direction of human affairs. It discusses the achievements of the Islamic Empire and its successful experiment with pre-modern Mediterranean and Near Eastern imperialism.

Keywords: Islamic empire, Arab Muslims, Eurasia, Iberia, North Africa, religion, God's providential direction, pre-modern imperialism

At least for the intrepid adventurer, to leave the southern Iberian city of Cordoba for the eastern Iranian oasis town of Merv during the rule of Justin I (r. 518–27 CE) meant traveling from Visigothic Spain through Vandal North Africa, crossing the notional divide between the western and eastern Roman empires and into late Roman Egypt, negotiating a Syrian/Arabian no man's land between the two empires, entering into the westernmost territories of what remained in the early sixth century a relatively decentralized Sasanian empire, and finally traversing the Iranian plateau to Merv, the last major settlement before one crossed the Oxus River and entered Transoxiana, the gateway to Central Asia and then in large measure still distinctively Sogdian in language and culture. Very approximately, the distance was 4,500 or so miles as traveled on foot, horseback, and ship, and at twelve or fourteen miles a day, perhaps it took about a year. It was a long and difficult journey.

The First Islamic Empire

It was also a journey of religious, ethnic, fiscal, linguistic, and political discontinuities, where the languages, symbols, and coins of rule differed from one region to the next, most strikingly on the opposite sides of the Roman/Sasanian frontier. Fortified in some places, and patrolled in others by Ghassanid tribesmen or other *foederati*, this frontier marked a fairly effective political and economic divide between the two long-standing rivals for power in the eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds, Rome and Persia, if not a cultural cordon sanitaire. Ideas, technologies, contagions, goods (a toll of 25 percent was typically levied on those imported from the east), and people (especially armies and the captives they took) (p. 519) naturally crossed the frontier; some local traditions and cults even bridged it (Fowden 1999; Walker 2002; Becker 2006). It is also perfectly true that the Roman and Sasanian empires shared venerable histories and some common problems, especially resourcing their large armies by extracting and organizing agricultural surpluses (Howard-Johnston 1995). Still, having crossed a series of internal frontiers, our imaginary adventurer would have understood himself to have moved from one political culture and economy to another: from a now-ragged Roman empire, whose structure was largely determined by the Mediterranean (especially the transport of North African and Egyptian grains), and whose political culture, conducted largely in Latin and Greek, was increasingly conditioned by an exclusive and militant Christianity, to a Sasanian one that was organized around Mesopotamian grains and Persian Gulf and Central Asian trade, and which ruled (and accommodated) its subjects through a dualist (and largely tolerant) Zoroastrianism, the language of rule being Pahlavi, the chief form of Middle Persian. Today there is no mistaking a sixth-century *denarius*, which features the emperor's bust on one side and imperial propaganda on the other, with a sixth-century *drachm*, which features an elaborately crowned *shah* and fire temple. Nor was there any mistaking one rival for the other in the sixth century.

But of course the rivalry between the two great powers of antiquity would soon end—and all the familiar patterns of regional history with it. Although Justinian had restitched some of the fabric of Roman rule in the 530s, the mending was only temporary. After one last and particularly destructive installment in a long series of Roman-Persian wars, it would fall to others to realize and then improve upon both the Roman and Sasanian imperial projects (see Map 18.1).



[Click to view larger](#)

Map 18.1 The Umayyad Empire circa 740 CE.

Had our imaginary traveler followed the same itinerary two centuries later (now the third decade of the eighth century), he would have remained within the frontiers of a single polity. For Arab Muslims now possessed effective sovereignty over the huge multiethnic, multilingual, and culturally

The First Islamic Empire

and religiously heterogeneous and geographically variegated band of western and central Eurasia that stretched from Iberia and North Africa in the west to Transoxiana and Sind in the east. Put another way, they ruled lands that were bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean, the Caspian and Red Seas, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. In fact, two centuries after Justin, during the caliphate of Hisham (b. ‘Abd al-Malik; r. 724–743), the last of the caliph-sons of the most visionary imperialist of early Islam, ‘Abd al-Malik (b. Marwan; see below), the Islamic empire was now at its geographical maximum. These lands were not merely ruled, however; they were enfolded within a single and powerful imperial state, which, dominated by a Syrian political-military apparatus, was inscribing its authority across its heterogeneous societies. Virtually everywhere, the spoken and written language of rule was the same (Arabic), and the logic, symbols, and reason for rule (Islam) common. As much as Roman coins contrast so markedly from Sasanian ones, post-reform Islamic coins struck in formerly Byzantine and Sasanian lands from the mid-690s are remarkably similar: to the untrained eye, a silver coin (the *dirham*) struck in early eighth-century Cordoba is indistinguishable from issues struck on the opposite side (p. 520) (p. 521) of this huge polity. In the post-Roman west, one conventionally speaks of a clutch of minor states that succeeded the Roman empire; but in the provinces of the east that were lost by the Sasanians, alongside a rump Byzantine empire, one must thus speak of a single, massive state that, engineered by the Umayyads, and transformed by the early Abbasids, surpassed it. Only in the middle of the ninth century did that unitary state begin to fragment into a commonwealth of smaller Islamic states, itself largely unified by a common history and culture.

Understanding this state means understanding something of its religious foundations. To those Muslims who would write the state’s seventh- and eighth-century history during the ninth and tenth centuries, the early polity, like the conquests that had preceded it, was part of God’s providential direction of human affairs; it was the most recent phase in a divine plan that had started with Creation, passed through prophecy, and would end with the End (Crone 2004). Muslims were God’s creation and so His instruments, individually responsible to Him for their own salvation, and collectively to each other for constructing and maintaining an earthly order that could guide all believers to their salvation, initially through the charismatic office of the caliph, later by enforcing a fairly fixed law. “Rightly guided” societies might be tiny (such as the Qur’an’s monotheist communities led by pre-Islamic prophets) or they might be huge (such as the caliphate), but in all cases they were supposed to serve religious ends. To this way of thinking, the state functioned as the agency that protected, encouraged, and upheld that order, at the top of which stood the caliph, whose qualifications and powers were often subject to intense debate. (Most held that there was to be only one caliph, but there are notable exceptions.) Relatively less was said about the state as such, but one thing was generally assumed: in the natural course of events, God being merciful, the area under the sovereignty of that agency would inexorably grow in size, war (either defensive or offensive) being a commonly accepted mode of expansion. The area under Islamic sovereignty was called the *dar al-*

The First Islamic Empire

islam (“the abode of Islam”), and those areas out of it were known as either “the abode of war” or “the abode of unbelief.”

The state’s function was thus to realize a religious plan, and Islam was the logic of rule and an irresistible marker of status for Arabs in a southern Mediterranean and Near Eastern world that was already going monotheist. While Islam spread slowly among non-Arabs (in many or most provinces, it seems that Islam became the faith of the majority no earlier than the late ninth and tenth centuries), it very quickly gained a virtual monopoly on the Arabs. Pockets of Arabian polytheism survived the seventh century, but they were politically inert. Early Arab Muslims were frequently given to rebellion against the state and, much less frequently, secession from it, but leaving aside the so-called wars of apostasy that broke out among Arabian tribes upon Muhammad’s death in 632, as a rule they rebelled and seceded as Muslims, rather than as pagans or rival monotheists. It was that rare Arab tribe, such as the Taghlib of Mesopotamia, that opted out, retaining their Monophysite Christianity; another example is the Tanukh of Syria, who seem to have converted to Islam only in the early Abbasid period. In fact, a highly plastic Islam had such a monopoly on politics that even among non-Arabs, commitment to a revolutionary (p. 522) or oppositional form of the religion, such as Kharijism among the Berbers of North Africa, Shi’ism among the Daylamites in northern Iran, and (again) the Berbers of North Africa, was a much more common response to caliphal imperialism than was native rebellion. (The odd example of that can be found in the Coptic rebellions of the early Abbasid period.) It was precisely because Islam could provide such a powerful language of both legitimation and revolutionary opposition that in the middle of the eighth century ethnic Persians from Khurasan could so spectacularly rebel—and then rule—as Muslims.

So it had turned out that not only did God speak Arabic but also His Arab Prophet had put in place a political order that was irresistibly Islamic. Now the preceding oversimplifies and telescopes at least two centuries of history and political thinking; how many of these ideas were shared by the caliphate’s seventh- and eighth-century architects is hard to know because the evidence is so exiguous (Donner 1998; Robinson 2003). To those who understand premodern Eurasian history in less theological and more strategic terms, it can be said that two regional powers (the Romans and Sasanians) had been replaced by a single superpower (the caliphate), and that this regional superpower now shared continental hegemony with the T’ang, who had founded a seventh-century empire on the other side of Asia. Partisan Islamicists and Sinologists may dispute which had pride of place in early medieval Eurasia, but one thing is clear enough: on the one occasion when the armies of the two empires actually met, the Muslims stopped the Chinese advance into Central Asia in 751 somewhere on the Talas River, which skirts the borders of present-day Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Thereafter, the region would fall under Islamic rather than Chinese influence, sometimes indirectly, other times directly.

Another thing is clear too: in continental terms, the (mostly Germanic) successor states of the west were of little significance, sitting as they did at the far edge of the Eurasian network of politics and exchange. While Europe in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries was not as economically isolated as once thought, it was still an economic

The First Islamic Empire

basket-case by eastern standards. Politically fragmented, it sat at the tail end of a trading network powered elsewhere, its agricultural base far too spotty and shallow to produce the armies, states, and cities necessary to produce serious culture or civilization.

Byzantium enjoyed a more advantageous position in this network, but shorn of its most productive European and North African provinces, its greatest achievement was probably in surviving as long as it did. Political and economic power had decisively moved east.

It is certainly difficult to overstate the scale of the achievement. Seventh- and eighth-century Muslims not only formed the last of the great religious movements of antiquity, but they also assembled what was arguably the most successful experiment in premodern Mediterranean and Near Eastern imperialism. For the first and only time in history, lands irrigated by the Guadalquivir, Nile, and Oxus rivers were producing revenues that were extracted by a single polity. Since it took the Romans about three times as long to assemble an empire about three-quarters the size of the Umayyads', the caliphs' only serious rivals as empire-builders from within western Eurasia were probably the Achaemenids, whose empire encompassed not only greater (p. 523) Iran and the Fertile Crescent but also northeast Africa, Anatolia, and the eastern Balkans. This said, for all their military and political successes, the Achaemenids' politico-religious culture, at least as transmitted and modified by the Parthians and Sasanians, was scarcely compelling enough to compete with that engineered by early Muslims, coming as they did at the tail end of late antiquity, which so powerfully combined Hellenism, empire, and monotheism. (Even those Iranians who resisted Islamic rule in the seventh and eighth centuries, or who sought to restore Persian power in the ninth and tenth, had little knowledge of, or interest in, Darius or Xerxes; their cultural memory was largely limited to mythological or Sasanian figures.) And what goes for the Achaemenids goes a fortiori for the Umayyads' other serious rivals from eastern Eurasia, the Mongols. Careful organization goes some way toward accounting for their spectacular military successes in the thirteenth century, when they formed an empire and transnational trade network that stretched all the way from Hungary to the Sea of Japan (Abu-Lughod 1989), but their legal, linguistic, and religious traditions were no match for either the Islamic or Chinese worlds that they ruled: the Mongols conquered the Near East, but not so their Shamanism and Buddhism, not to mention their language. Quite aside from the destruction they wrought, they were altogether better at ordering and decimalizing armies than they were organizing societies: aside from the short-term glory of Maragha and other cities fortunate enough to receive the khans' favor, the Mongol cultural achievement was modest at best.

So the Achaemenid legacy was blended into a cultural matrix that combined ancient Mesopotamian and Iranian traditions with Hellenism and, in time, monotheism, while the Mongols left the steppe and assimilated almost entirely into a thirteenth-century Islamic civilization that had its roots in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. Only early Muslims can be said to have combined religious and political genius with such spectacular effect. Finishing a job first started by Constantine three centuries earlier, they fused and transformed religious ideas made available by a wide variety of religious (Jewish, Christian, and Manichaean) and imperial (Byzantine and Sasanian) traditions, generating a religio-political order during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries that

was distinctively their own and, as we shall see, rationalized and legitimated the postconquest state. In what follows, I offer a very brief overview of how the early Muslims constructed their early state and empire, focusing on their first empire, that of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750; for more detail, see Robinson 2005a; 2010).

Tribal Conquests and Muslim Belief

From Justin's vantage point, the unlikely successors to the Roman and Sasanian states were tribesmen from an edge of the civilized world where traditions of state building were conspicuously weak and the prospect of effective military (p. 524) organization remote. In fact, unlike in south and east Arabia, the oasis settlements of west Arabia (the Hijaz) were among the few inhabited places in the Mediterranean world that had remained virtually naïve of some kind of sustained state control or influence. (The closest they came to such influence was exercised by sixth-century Sasanian tax agents, but the evidence for this phase of Hijazi history is very thin.) All the stranger, then, that in the short century between circa 630 and 715, tribesmen conquerors from the Hijaz moved north into Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran in the 630s and 640s (Merv fell in 650), onto the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus, Rhodes, and Crete in the 650s (and later), then further west (especially in the 670s and, in the 710s, into Spain) and east, into Transoxiana and Sind (again, especially during the 710s) (Donner 1981; Kennedy 2007). Certainly neither the Byzantines nor the Sasanians can be faulted for failing to have predicted the explosion of political action that took place in the Hijaz and led to their catastrophic defeat. The area and the Arabs were not thought capable of producing a military machine that could topple ancient empires, which explains why the north Arabian desert was left to defend itself. As one of the earliest witnesses to the conquest of Palestine saw things in about 634, the "Saracens...have now risen up against us unexpectedly and ravage all with cruel and feral designs" (Hoyland 1997, 69).

How did it happen? Describing in any detail how this toppling took place is unfortunately very difficult. When it comes to writing detailed conquest history, the Islamic historiographical tradition of the eighth and ninth centuries can sometimes be as prolix as the non-Islamic sources (especially Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Armenian) can be laconic, but in different ways all the traditions are problematic, sometimes in the extreme. Coverage of Spain is particularly thin: of the conquest of Cordoba itself, we can say little beyond the fact that the city fell to a typically small force of Arab and Berber soldiers in late 711. What we know of events in Merv is fuller, but it cannot rival our understanding of the wars narrated by classical or classicizing historians. Be this as it may—and despite extravagant claims that argue for a *translatio imperii*—there is no question that the change of rule came through organized military conquest (Nevo and Koren 2003), which was effected relatively quickly and generally involved altogether less violence and social dislocation than were caused by many of the Roman-Persian wars of the late sixth and early seventh centuries. The course of the great conquests turned on a handful of key

The First Islamic Empire

battles that took place outside of population centers; for the most part, armies were small (mortalities are sometimes numbered by the Islamic sources in the hundreds, sometimes in the low thousands, while Christian sources often have them considerably larger). The archaeological record for the only area that has been worked at all carefully (Greater Syria) shows broad continuity of settlement across the conquest divide; earlier views that associated the conquests with the disappearance of the classical city, “beduinisation,” or dramatic reductions in settlement have been discredited (Walmsley 2007). Exception aside, on the whole it seems that the barbarians stormed the gate, but they left the city intact and, as we shall presently see, built a city for themselves outside of its walls.

(p. 525) If reconstructing conquest events is difficult, explaining them is all the more so. I have already noted that the Arabic conquest narratives are relatively uninformed and unreliable guides to conquest history. Here it must be emphasized that penetrating and sometimes fatal criticisms have also been made of the traditional Arabic narratives of Hijazi origins for Islam—of a prevailing polytheistic culture in and around Mecca and Medina, where Muhammad preached and, through conviction and force of personality, successively led his believers to victories over the pagan tribes of the Peninsula (Crone and Cook 1977; Hawting 1999). Unfortunately, there is no real alternative to these narratives, virtually all of which are the products of a mature Abbasid empire and classical Islamic thought, since the earlier, non-Islamic sources and material evidence are so spotty and problematic. Be this as it may, the result is that all detailed reconstructions of Prophetic and very early Islamic history are subject to serious objections. *Faute de mieux*, a considerably less detailed and moderately more sophisticated version of that traditional narrative remains the consensus view among modern historians. And, as far as the subject of this collection is concerned, it boils down to this: the dynamic of Islamic state building was first put in place by Muhammad himself, and state building and conquest were closely related. It can be recapitulated briefly as follows.

Such as it is, the seventh-century evidence shows that Muhammad, living as he did in a pocket of the late antique world where tribalism prevailed and tribal chiefs had wide-ranging social authority, articulated (or followed, depending on one’s convictions) a model of prophecy according to which prophets not only communicated God’s will by delivering revelations or scriptures but also exemplified it by building polities that carried out that will. He accordingly possessed what we would regard as religious, legal, military, and political authority over the tribesmen-believers who embraced his cause; one may doubt whether the polity that Muhammad founded is usefully called a “state,” but it is not for nothing that a standard biography calls him “Muhammad, Prophet and statesman” (Watt 1964; cf. Donner 1986; Cook 1983). Whatever the depth of their personal conviction, heretofore mostly pagan and fissiparous Arabian tribesmen, many with the skills for riding and coordinated fighting that come with a pastoralist or semipastoralist lifestyle, rallied to Muhammad, who consolidated his authority in the town of Yathrib (which was renamed Medina, “the city”) after circa 622 and soon committed to a program of holy war (jihad) outside of it. This program, which is sketched out in the Qur’an itself and was exemplified by Muhammad’s campaigns against the pagan tribesmen of Arabia, called upon Muslims to make their belief in God and His

The First Islamic Empire

Prophet fully manifest by proving themselves before Him on the battlefield so as to defend the nascent community in Medina and defeat oppressive unbelief. Jihad was a “striving” against long odds, but one that resonated with Hijazi values precisely because those odds were so long and the opportunity for glory so attractive. Qur’an 9:5 infamously directs believers to kill the polytheists wherever they may be, and Qur’an 9:29 calls upon them to fight “those who do not believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Prophet have forbidden...until they pay the *jizya* [an obscure term that came to mean tribute (p. 526) and head tax] out of hand and are humiliated.” In return, wealth in this world and eternal comfort in the next (the two were entirely compatible) were promised for those participating, especially those martyred (on jihad, see Morabia 1993; Firestone 1999; Landau-Tasseron 2005; Bonner 2006). Here it should be noted in passing that crusading was in the seventh-century air: Heraclius (r. 610–641) was campaigning at much the same time on a similar platform of military sacrifice and sure salvation, eventually restoring the True Cross from Ctesiphon to Jerusalem (Mitchell 2007, 418).

Now Christians and Jews might call foul at Muhammad’s movement—a text probably written in the 630s brands him a pseudo-prophet, “for do prophets come with a sword?”—but there is no denying how effective he was (Doctrina Jacobi 1991, 208ff.). A well-led and organized elite, an inspiring message (perhaps made all the more pressing by eschatological anxieties), and a body of skillful fighters—these were the ingredients that produced the highly effective armies that marched under the banner of God and the Prophet, and which not only spread his authority throughout most of Arabia during the 620s but also beyond it soon after he died. For the extra-Arabian movements of conquest flowed directly from the inner Arabian campaigns, which took the caliphs’ armies to northern Arabia—and so to the borders of Syria and southern Iraq, where they had their first encounters with imperial armies. Although environmental explanations come in and out of fashion (Korotayev, Klimenko, and Proussakov 1999), accounting for the Arabs’ astounding success against those armies has generally meant adducing their strength and resourcefulness (not only their motivation, but also their mobility), as well as Roman and Sasanian weakness, especially manpower shortages resulting from earlier wars and plague pandemics, in addition to poor strategic thinking (cf. Whitby 1995, 120–122). In sum, timing is thought to have been almost everything: the integrating and motivating force of a Qur’anic program of jihad differentiated seventh-century west Arabians from their forebears, while the crises of the sixth and early seventh centuries are thought to have subverted the Byzantine and Sasanian defenses.

It almost goes without saying that the implosion and collapse of one ancient empire, and the halving and near defeat of another, are naturally events of some interest—at least to ancient historians. Still, since well-organized, horse-riding tribesmen, be they from the steppe or the desert, enjoyed some regular (and sometimes spectacular) success against standing armies throughout the premodern history of Eurasia, what makes seventh-century Arab Muslims exceptional is not so much that they conquered so quickly but that they ruled so effectively. The Mongols conquered more and they did so more quickly. Unlike the Mongols, however, the Arabs *literally* dismounted in order to fight (it appears that mounts were used more for speedy transport than for fighting advantage), and

The First Islamic Empire

figuratively dismounted so as to be able to rule. Put more prosaically, Arabian conquerors quickly became Syrian imperialists ruling in styles that were at once recognizably Islamic and Syro-Byzantine, the rudimentary polity of tribesmen-soldiers, which was directed for and fueled by conquest, being transformed in the late seventh and (p. 527) eighth centuries into an agrarian-based, religiously legitimated, and increasingly centralized and bureaucratically complex imperial state. Negotiating the transition from spectacular conquerors to long-term rulers was not only an act of political and cultural self-preservation for the Arab elite but also qualifies as an exceptional episode in the recorded history of tribal empire-building.

If the state got its start through local and modest, then foreign and spectacular conquest, including all the booty and spoils it generated—not just silver and gold and the like, but especially captives, who were enslaved in the thousands—in the middle term it would thus be redesigned to extract and centralize agricultural surplus; in time, it would also encourage merchant trade. From this perspective, it can be said that although early Muslims retained their language and the elements of their faith, they conformed to the prevailing model of Mediterranean and Near Eastern imperialism, which they had inherited from Rome and Ctesiphon. Given the extraordinary geography of their realm, it was the natural thing to do. For one thing, in taking Byzantine Oriens and Egypt (and, two generations later, Africa), in addition to Sasanian Iraq and greater Iran, the caliphs took possession of southwest Asia's most productive grain- and oil-producing areas, particularly the Nile Valley and the Mesopotamian alluvium. The breadbaskets of two empires could now feed and enrich one. (It is said that soon after the conquest of Egypt, grain shipments were diverted to Arabia, where, given the size of settlements there, it must have been surplus to requirements.) For another thing, the ports of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea (such as they were), and, most important, the Persian Gulf, were now in Muslim hands; so, too, were the oases, stopping posts, villages, towns, and cities of the Khurasan Road, which led east into Transoxiana—and the filaments of the Silk Road. All or parts of two trading networks, a Byzantine one that crossed the Mediterranean, and a Sasanian one that crossed the Indian Ocean and the steppes of Central Asia, were now in the hands of merchants living in a single empire. The lifeblood of this trade was a relatively high-standard and stable coinage in silver and gold (with a typical exchange rate of 15:1); virtually uniform in design from the western Mediterranean to the Central Asia, it was the envy of the non-Islamic world. For the political and military power of the unitary Umayyad and early Abbasid states commanded wide and deep resources (such as old coins for reminting; the stores of precious metals in the treasuries, churches, and temples of the Byzantine east and Buddhist India; and the gold and silver mines of the Sahara, Arabia, and Transoxiana) that generated a bimetallic system of exchange.

So as much as contemporaneous Europe was poorly positioned and resourced for state building, the Islamic Near East was thus ideally located and prodigiously endowed. What this means is that while Muslims had assembled a powerful conquest machine in Arabia, they also found themselves heir to the traditions and lands of the two powerful and ancient states of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. They accordingly had a

choice to make. They could have assimilated into those worlds and lost their language and their religion—and so what had made them special in God’s eyes. Alternatively, they could have held on to what made them (p. 528) special, ignored the worlds around them, and, hunkering down in Arabia, watched as political power was presumably retaken by resurgent Byzantine and Persian (if not necessarily Sasanian) or even Turkic armies. In keeping both their religion and their power, they began to create what we know as Islamic civilization.

The Early Caliphate: The Pragmatism of Conquest

The history of the seventh- and early eighth-century state can be said to be about how the elite outfitted itself with increasingly powerful tools and techniques of rule (Crone 1980). Although Medina functioned as a capital of sorts for the first three caliphs, this history takes place in Syria under two Umayyad dynasties. The first was the short-lived Sufyanids (r. 660–683), dominated by Mu`awiya (b. Abi Sufyan; r. 661–680), who moved the court to Syria, which he had governed on behalf of his kinsman, `Uthman, the first Umayyad caliph (r. 644–656). The second was the Marwanids (r. 692–750), dominated by `Abd al-Malik (b. Marwan; r. 692–705), who was followed by no fewer than four caliph-sons and three caliph-grandsons (Hawting 2000; Kennedy 2004). What separated the Marwanids from the Sufyanids politically was a civil war that broke out upon the death of Yazid, Mu`awiya’s son (r. 680–683), and which revolved largely around Sufyanid legitimacy. What distinguishes them as state builders is that whereas Mu`awiya oversaw a conquest state slowly running down, the Marwanids fully committed to establishing a settled empire (cf. Humphreys 2006).

How did the conquest polity work? Since the state was supposed to fulfill God’s plan, and God’s principal agent on earth and the head of that polity was the caliph (the Arabic term *khalifa* originally meant “representative of God”), we can start there.

Although the full articulation of this caliphal theory begins to emerge toward the end of the first Islamic century, from as early as we can trace things, it seems that the caliphs, all of whom were drawn from the Prophet’s tribe of the Quraysh, saw themselves as ruling on behalf of the one God and His Prophet (Crone and Hinds 1986). Although none apparently claimed to inherit Muhammad’s role as Prophet, the early ones certainly all made claim to much of that same, very broad portfolio of authority and power that he had possessed in Arabia. This included the right to command armies, adjudicate disputes, and pronounce on matters of belief and law, including legislating, a right that they lost only in the ninth century. God’s absolute authority was thus understood to cascade down from Him and His Prophet to caliph in a more or less undifferentiated form, and then from caliph to governors, commanders, and judges and the like: power, authority, duties, and responsibilities fragmented and focused the further one traveled down the line. Early

The First Islamic Empire

Muslims frequently disagreed about which candidate was most suited for the office of the caliphate, and this is why the polity had to survive the succession crisis upon Muhammad's death, four civil wars (in the 650s, 680s, 740s, and 810s) and a "revolution" (750) that transferred power from one line of Quraysh to another; but through it all, there was near-universal agreement that the caliph carried that very broad portfolio of authority. (p. 529)

Already during the reign of Mu`awiya (r. 661–680), elements of Islam's emblematic religio-political vocabulary first appear, tentatively, on a small handful of inscriptions and coins. In one inscription in Palestine, for example, he appears as the "commander of the believers." The same title describes him on a coin struck in the southern Iranian town of Darabjird, and here it is worth noting—and emphasizing—that its dating is Sasanian and its language Persian. Both the scale and tone of Mu`awiya's court betray the caliph's Arabian origins. As an Umayyad, Mu`awiya had the good fortune to belong to a high-status clan of the Quraysh, and he captured the caliphate by combining that status with a program of vengeance for the death of `Uthman; but he seems to have retained it for as long as he did by conducting himself in ways that exemplified sound leadership (especially forbearance) and by practicing a politics of persuasion, cajoling, entertaining, gifting, and threatening the Syrian tribal notables upon whom his rule effectively relied. In some respects, he thus appears as *primus inter pares*, a far cry from the awesome *mysterium* of the Abbasid caliphs a century later. It was through frequent personal contact, which was made possible by what amounted to peripatetic courts, and kinship (Mu`awiya himself married into Syrian tribes), that the caliph ruled. Not only does ceremonial seem to have been spare, but also the court was relatively small and homogeneous. Nevertheless, there are impressive enough descriptions of his palace-complex in Damascus, which have it accommodating a mint and a prison; in any case, it was large enough to be reused by later caliphs (Flood 2001, 147ff.).

The tribesmen conquerors themselves—initially virtually all Arabian Muslims—were served by a bureau (*diwan*) that redistributed booty and paid stipends, which had been established by the second caliph, `Umar (Puin 1970). According to our sources, payment was made according to experience, thus rewarding those who had joined the conquest armies earlier more generously than those who joined later; the caliph had a one-fifth share in the booty. Many tribesmen-soldiers, to some degree with the encouragement of the ruling elite, settled in tribally organized garrisons in which those benefits were distributed and the campaigning armies mustered. (Judging the size of these armies is nearly guesswork; some estimates have ranged to as high as 250,000 to 300,000 registered soldiers at the turn of the eighth century, but this is certainly too high [Kennedy 2001].) Examples of these garrisons can be found from nearly one end of the conquered lands to the other, as can a fairly common pattern: the garrisons were located near or even adjacent to pre-Islamic towns and cities, but only exceptionally (e.g., in seventh-century Syria and eighth-century Spain) did Arabs settle within those preexisting towns. The intention was in part military—mustering troops is easier when they are exclusively garrisoned together—and in part cultural: locating Arab settlements at some distance from preexisting towns and cities was apparently an attempt to insulate (p. 530)

The First Islamic Empire

the conquerors from the pressures and influences of assimilation into the huge majority of non-Arab, non-Muslim subjects. In the event, the effort at segregation failed. Although non-Arab conversion to Islam was relatively slow, non-Arab emigrants responded to the opportunities offered in and around the garrisons for employment and social advancement more generally, taking up both Arabic and Islam. Several garrisons thus blossomed into towns and eventually cities, so eclipsing preexisting administrative and political centers. Thus inland Qayrawan (founded purportedly because of its distance from Byzantine sea power) succeeded Carthage as the capital of Islamic Ifriqiya, while Fustat (near the southern edge of present-day Cairo) succeeded Alexandria, though the latter remained an important trading port well into Islamic rule. It was originally as modest garrisons that the two great eighth- and ninth-century cities of southern Iraq, Basra and Kufa, were originally founded. The study of the earliest garrisons is handicapped by inadequate archaeology (Kubiak 1987). Merv provides a variation on this pattern, since it was founded very close to, but still outside of the city walls, of the Sasanian settlement.

What we have in the middle of the seventh century, then, is a huge expanse of conquered land populated overwhelmingly by non-Muslims. Upon these lands were strewn a few scatter rugs of Muslim settlement, where tribesmen, drawn out of Arabia by conviction and opportunity, initially belonged to a tiny religious elite of soldier-believers, who, as decades passed, eventually took up a larger variety of occupations and lifestyles, often settling and losing their tribal commitments. As concentrations of Muslim power, these garrison-cities were naturally the foci of the polity, but the polity remained underdeveloped by Marwanid standards and the task of ruling the great swaths of non-Muslim subjects was carried out minimally. The lands they inhabited were divided into four huge regions. Northern Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and all Arabia came under the direct authority of the caliph, who, ruling from Syria, functioned as its governor, too. Meanwhile, the rest of the empire was divided into three governorships: North Africa and Egypt; Basra and those eastern provinces associated with it through conquest; and Kufa and associated provinces (Morony 1984; Robinson 2000). So far as we can tell, early Islamic administrative geographies frequently followed pre-Islamic patterns and, by later Umayyad and Abbasid standards, they were crude. Kinship (whether “real,” adoptive, or invented), often along with competence, conditioned the conduct of politics in general, and the appointment of the governors, who enjoyed wide-ranging and relatively undifferentiated authority, frequently serving as commanders and judges too. In this early period, before sedentarization and the dispersal of tribesmen across the empire weakened effective kinship ties, tribal chiefs possessed decisive social and political power. As it happened, it was these fickle chiefs who were instrumental in the collapse of Sufyanid power in the early 680s, and their fickleness goes some way toward explaining why, as we shall presently see, ‘Abd al-Malik would professionalize the army.

How the state captured the resources of the conquered lands is less clear than one would like, but much was *ad hoc* and *laissez-faire*. If it was up to the polity’s (p. 531) non-Muslim subjects to provide the bulk of the state’s revenues through labor, tribute, land taxes, and a poll tax—in fact, individual tax liability was an important token of one’s subordinate

The First Islamic Empire

status—there is no evidence that the polity sought to integrate and absorb the machinery of taxation for at least two generations. Put another way, ruling seems to have meant building coalitions among the tiny Arab elite, but the business of administering and taxing subjects was outsourced. The God of the Qur'an was largely transcendent, and the government that had been put in place on earth reflected His nature—distant and unknowable.

Outside of Egypt, the early fiscal history of these provinces is virtually impossible to write in any detail, but in addition to providing very early documentation for a variety of local *corvées*, levies, and taxes, the surviving papyri there show at least two unmistakable features. The first, which doubtlessly applied elsewhere, is that Muslims relied upon rump Byzantine (and Sasanian) bureaucracies to extract revenue, much as they appear to have relied upon the circulation of Byzantine and Sasanian coins (or their imitations) to provide a money supply, sometimes adding brief Arabic formulae in the margins that confirmed their validity as coinage; in fact, the great variety of coinage styles and standards points to a multiplicity of striking authorities in this period, although the case has been made for some centralization (Album and Goodwin 2002; Foss 2002). The Byzantine and Sasanian administration in the provinces had been decapitated, but its body remained, and with little or no tradition of taxing and administering of their own, the Arab Muslims relied upon the human capital that was in place. Put another way, just as the conquerors were inclined to leave the cities they conquered intact, so, too, were they inclined to leave the imperial machinery in place; the Arabs did not destroy the world they ruled, but exploited it. Thus throughout this early period, most adult, male, non-Muslim (and so non-Arab) subjects were at least theoretically liable for a land tax and a head tax (the latter inspired at least by Qur'anic precedent), which, generally levied collectively and yielded by local notables, was figured and processed largely by Christian and Zoroastrian administrators and clerks (Simonsen 1988). Muslims left the dirty work of accounting to those with the expertise to carry it out (they seem to have held accountants in contempt), insisting only on their sovereignty and (perhaps) attributing rather more symbolic significance to the head tax as a token of submission and humiliation than we might generally assume. Just as Arab tribal chiefs functioned as middlemen between a tiny ruling elite and the tribal rank-in-file, so Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian social elites (especially landowners, priests, bishops, monks, and the like) interposed themselves between the weak state and strong tribes, families and local networks.

The second feature revealed by the Egyptian papyri, which *may* apply elsewhere, is that the Muslim political-military elite sought to maximize revenue within a few years of the conquest, applying direct pressure and sometimes effecting new policies of their own; in this respect, they were something more than passive beneficiaries of a revenue system running independently of them (Gascou 1983; Morimoto 1981; Sijpesteijn 2007). This feature sits uneasily with the early literary evidence in Syriac that shows many areas remaining untaxed during the first (p. 532) decades of Islamic rule; in those areas, it took a Marwanid revolution in statecraft to introduce systematic taxation (cf. Robinson 2000, 44ff.). In this early period, it is very possible—indeed, I should think it likely—that the

tributary regime was inconsistent, a work-in-progress. Here it bears emphasizing that Egypt was anomalous not only in its geography but also because its bureaucratic traditions may have been less disrupted by sixth- and seventh-century warfare (with the attendant militarization of administration) than were Syria and Mesopotamia. Perhaps its revenues were low-hanging fruit. Firm conclusions are impossible, which is why the character of Mu`awiya's polity—especially the degree to which he (or his court) was able to manage effectively and concentrate the resources being extracted in the provinces for specific purposes—remains open to debate (cf. Foss 2002).

Systematizing the Techniques of Rule

What is not open to debate is that 'Abd al-Malik, the first Marwanid to rule for any length of time (his father, Marwan, was the first to claim the caliphate), introduced policies that considerably strengthened the state's techniques of rule, both literal and symbolic. Now it is true that in some respects the elite's ruling style remained rooted in preexisting patterns—Syria remained the metropolitan province, and the caliphs and princes moved among residences in Damascus and settlements in and on the Syrian steppe, some of which reflect a distinctive Arabo-Byzantine cultural context (Fowden 2004). By the cosmopolitan standards later set in the huge Abbasid conurbations of Baghdad and Samarra, Umayyad residences were small and transportable, while the court cultures they accommodated were relatively provincial. For all the continuities in courtly styles and scale, however, there is no mistaking the structural changes now at work.

In terms of *power*, the most important of the early Marwanid changes was fully professionalizing the army and replacing tribal chiefs with commanders, thus creating the Syrian armies that would rule the provinces until the 740s, sometimes brutally and certainly showily. The southern Iraqi garrison of Wasit, which was founded by the iron-fisted governor, al-Hajjaj, in 703, is a good case in point: among the rebellious Shi`ites and Kharijites of Basra and Kufa, the garrison's army was one of many armies of occupation. At the same time—and for closely related reasons—taxing became more systematic. Evidence from Iraq and Egypt show several things at work in the last decade of the seventh century and first decade of the eighth: a taxing regime being introduced in areas that had theretofore yielded only occasional tribute, tax concessions being withdrawn (e.g., from monks), and the tax net being more securely draped across those who had previously slipped through it (e.g., mobile peasants and tax fugitives, who were now made to wear tags or carry passports; Robinson 2005b). To judge by some apocalyptic texts, some regions (e.g., parts of northern Mesopotamia) seem to have been experiencing Muslim rule for (p. 533) the first time. One assumes that much of the revenues paid not only for the occupying armies but also for more aggressive campaigning on the frontier. The civil war had forced a suspension of the jihad, but this was now reopened with spectacular results in the far west and east, as already noted.

The First Islamic Empire

Closely related to these changes, at which the surviving literary evidence only reluctantly hints, is the altogether better attested reform of the coinage. Starting in 696, first in gold and then later in silver, Muslim minters abandoned regional issues, which followed Byzantine and Sasanian models, as well as the temporary and experimental issues inspired by those models, for a distinctively Islamic nonfigural, epigraphic style. In fact, there otherwise being relatively little datable material evidence from the late seventh century, coins are our best measure for the changing character of the state. The sequence and dating remain incomplete and controversial, but what the coinage seems to show is incremental change (adaptation and conservative innovation are the rule in the 660s, 670s, and 680s, when there was no monopoly on minting), followed by breakneck acceleration in the 690s, when the state introduced and then quickly withdrew transitional styles, and then introduced the epigraphic style; this is followed by a period of relative conservatism, when the epigraphic style prevailed. In any event, the minting of silver and gold reform coins now became highly uniform (standards were set and followed) and centralized (Grierson 1960); for the first time, the state was clearly claiming a monopoly on minting. At the time of our hypothetical traveler in the early eighth century, the striking of silver coins was restricted to only four mints: Damascus, Cordoba, Qayrawan, and Wasit (Blankinship 1994). Weights and measures were also standardized in this period.

In crucial respects the unitary state that our hypothetical traveler entered was created between circa 680 and 710. And what was making the state unitary was principally language and a legitimizing and ordering faith (Robinson 2005a; a more evolutionary view is advocated in Donner 1986 and Hoyland 2006; cf. Johns 2003). There was naturally a very great deal of regional variation in the early eighth century, but nearly everywhere outside of Arabia and Syria the political elite was superimposed, foreign and relatively uniform. Everywhere governors (usually appointed for reason of either shared kinship or faction), upper-level tax agents, and commanders used the Arabic language, both in speech and in writing. Many appointees were ethnic Arabs who had come from the Peninsula, others from Arab tribes that had settled outside of Arabia, and fewer were non-Arabs who had acquired the language. (Of course the longer the history of Arab settlement in the conquered provinces, the blurrier was the line between Arabian Arabs and those assimilating into ruling society, especially through conversion and the acquisition of Arabic.) All this goes for the previous generation; but what is new is the new significance of Arabic. Much more than conversion to Islam, a command of Arabic was increasingly required for entrance into the state bureaucracy. The crucial step here was the (gradual) Arabicization of the bureaucracy, which began in the late seventh or early eighth century, and eventually opened state employment to those outside of the cadres of the *anciens régimes*. The Arabicization of the Egyptian (p. 534) administrative papyri, fortuitously (if spottily) preserved by the Egyptian climate, reveals a process that elsewhere goes almost completely undocumented.

The First Islamic Empire

While Arabic-speaking Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians would frequently find employment in this and subsequent Islamic states after the turn of the eighth century, the languages of antiquity—notably Greek and Persian—were of only antiquarian or academic interest (Wasserstein 2003). With the coins going exclusively Arabic, too, Greek and Persian were thus effectively dead as languages of rule, as were Aramaic and Latin. Although a spoken language of Iran would survive and be renewed as (written) New Persian in the ninth and tenth centuries, it did so as heavily Arabicized (in script and lexicon) and as patronized by eastern dynasts thoroughly committed to Islam. And not only was Arabic taking a stranglehold on imperial administration at the highest levels: in the early eighth century it was increasingly monopolizing official documentation at lower levels too, such non-Arabic official documentation that survived coming from the periphery of the empire. Within a century, Arabic would even begin to colonize the religious language of the politically colonized. The late eighth- and early ninth-century Melkites of Palestine were the first (but not the last) Christians of the empire to adopt written Arabic in their tradition, producing the first Arabic Bible (Griffith 1985). By the late ninth century Jews were sometimes writing their law in Arabic too.

As Arabic was the language of administration and empire—and, soon enough, culture—Islam was becoming an increasingly public language of rule. Most everywhere there were Muslims and Muslim rulers in any real numbers, there were now monumental symbols of God's rule as delegated to the caliphs' governors, tax agents, commanders, and, eventually, their judges. Hypostyle mosques, their prayer niches oriented toward Mecca, and adjoining mosque-palace complexes (Finster 1994; Johns 1999), though naturally less uniform than the coins, were a common currency of provincial rule and gave physical form to the constitutional marriage of religion and rule. When these monumental forms crystallized is less clear than we would like, but they seem to belong to the last decades of the seventh century. Where the timing is clearer is in the portable, documentary culture of empire. As the material evidence improves at the end of the century, we can increasingly discern how the authority of God, Muhammad, and governor was made virtually ubiquitous in a cluster of formulae, which regularly appear in the surviving documents, inscriptions, and—by orders of magnitude, in far greater numbers—on the coinage.

The tools of a settled empire—copper, silver, and gold coins, milestones, papyrus passports, glass weights, and lead sealings—may be unevenly distributed in the surviving corpus, but they regularly announce the sovereignty of God and of Islam: “God is one, God is eternal; he has not begotten, he was not begotten, nor has there ever been one equal to Him,” as Umayyad post-reform silver coins commonly put it in the field, while “Muhammad is His Prophet” lies in the margin. (In this period the caliphs' names can be found on the silver and gold coinage, the governors' on the copper.) Or, as one reads on a late-seventh-century milestone erected in Palestine: “In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate. There is no God (p. 535) but God alone. He has no partner. [Muhammad] is the messenger of God. [ʿAbd] al-Malik, the commander of the believers, has ordered the manufacture of these [milestones].” The explosion of material evidence that dates from the late seventh and early eighth centuries bears witness to a state that is

The First Islamic Empire

now highly productive of public insignia, and one that is capable of producing a body of such insignia that is consistent and coherent. The implicitly anti-Christian message of the coins and milestones is explicit in the Qur'anic passages recorded on the inscription band of early Islam's most famous monument, 'Abd al-Malik's Dome of the Rock. It is no coincidence that at least in the upper echelons, those who replaced the Christian and Zoroastrian administrators were non-Arab converts to Islam.

What explains the timing of the reforms? Of course, there need not be a single explanation for them all. Striking uniform coinage presumably related closely to military payment. Meanwhile, standardizing weights, measures, and coins no doubt served to facilitate commercial exchange, as did the erection of milestones (and an apparent improvement in the road-system) in Palestine and Syria. And, as it happens, archaeology does show that the Marwanids were patronizing commercial building (including markets and caravanserais) in Palestine and Syria (Walmsley 2000). Still, it is hard to resist proposing a broader set of reasons. One is a generational shift. Born too late to participate in the glorious, foundational moments of early Islam—especially Muhammad's preaching and the conquests of the 630s and 640s—and maturing in a postconquest state in which Muslims were having to come to terms with ruling a multiethnic empire, 'Abd al-Malik and his courtiers were freer to innovate than their predecessors, whose experience and status were rooted in Prophetic and early Islamic precedents. The dynasty also required a new legitimizing idiom. Whereas Mu'awiya came to power on a program of vengeance for a murdered kinsman, 'Abd al-Malik took power in the midst of the second civil war that not only ended the Sufyanid line but featured figures (the two most influential named al-Mukhtar and Ibn al-Zubayr) who, in word and deed, made trenchant criticisms of the religious order. Ibn al-Zubayr seems to have been the first to introduce on his coinage elements of the Islamic profession of faith, which would become standard on Marwanid coinage (Mochiri 1981, 168–172). The public embrace of Islamic doctrine suggests that the Marwanids had learned from their defeated opponents. They also seem to have learned the lessons of history: gone were the unreliable tribal chiefs who had played such an unstable role in Sufyanid politics and the highly decentralized polity more generally.

References

Abu-Lughod, J., 1989. *Before European hegemony: The world system, A.D. 1250–1350*. New York.

Album, S., and Goodwin, T., 2002. *Sylloge of Islamic coins in the Ashmolean*, vol. 1: *The pre-reform coinage of the early Islamic period*. Oxford.

Becker, A. H. 2006. *Fear of God and the beginning of wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the development of scholastic culture in late antique Mesopotamia*. Philadelphia. (p. 536)

The First Islamic Empire

- Blankinship, K. Y. 1994. *The end of the Jihad State: The Reign of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads*. Albany, NY.
- Bonner, M. 2006. *Jihad in Islamic history*. Princeton, NJ.
- Cook, M. 1983. *Muhammad*. Oxford.
- Crone, P. 1980. *Slaves on horses: The evolution of the Islamic polity*. Cambridge.
- . 2004. *Medieval Islamic political thought*. Edinburgh.
- Crone, P., and M. Cook. 1977. *Hagarism: The making of the Islamic world*. Cambridge.
- Crone, P., and M. Hinds. 1986. *God's caliph: Religious authority in the first centuries of Islam*. Cambridge.
- Doctrina Jacobi Nuper Baptizati. 1991. "V. Déroche." *Travaux et mémoires* 11: 47-273.
- Donner, F. M. 1981. *The early Islamic conquests*. Princeton, NJ.
- . 1986. "The formation of the Islamic state." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106: 283-296.
- . 1998. *Narratives of Islamic origins: The beginnings of Islamic historical writing*. Princeton, NJ.
- Finster, B. 1994. *Frühe iranische Moscheen*. Berlin.
- Firestone, R. 1999. *Jihad: The origin of Holy War in Islam*. Oxford.
- Flood, F. B. 2001. *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the makings of an Umayyad visual culture*. Leiden.
- Foss, C., 2002. "A Syrian coinage of Muàwiya?" *Revue Numismatique* 157: 353-365.
- Fowden, E. K. 1999. *The barbarian plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*. Berkeley, CA.
- Fowden, G. 2004. *Qusayr Àmra: art and the Umayyad elite in late antique Syria*. Berkeley, CA.
- Gascou, J. 1983. "De Byzance à l'Islam: les impôts en Egypte après la conquête arabe." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26: 97-109.
- Grierson, P. 1960. "The monetary reforms of 'Abd al-Malik." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3: 241-264.
- Griffith, S. H. 1985. "The Gospel in Arabic: An enquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century." *Oriens Christianus* 69: 126-167.

The First Islamic Empire

Hawting, G. R. 1999. *The idea of idolatry and the emergence of Islam: From polemic to history*. Cambridge.

———. 2000. *The first dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad caliphate, 661–750*. 2nd ed. London.

Johns, J. 1999. "The 'House of the Prophet' and the concept of the mosque." In J. Johns, ed., *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and early Islam*, 59–112. Oxford.

———. 2003. "Archaeology and the history of early Islam: The first seventy years." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46: 411–436.

Howard-Johnston, J. 1995. "The two great powers of late antiquity: A comparison." In A. Cameron, ed., *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3: *States, resources and armies*, 157–226. Princeton, NJ.

Hoyland, R. 1997. *Seeing Islam as others saw it*. Princeton, NJ.

———. 2006. "New documentary texts and the early Islamic state." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69: 395–416.

Humphreys, R. S. 2006. *Mu`awiya ibn abi Sufyan: From Arabia to empire*. Oxford.

Kennedy, H. 2001. *The armies of the caliphs*. London.

———. 2004. *The Prophet and the age of the caliphates*. 2nd ed. London.

———. 2007. *The great Arab conquests*. London. (p. 537)

Korotayev, A., V. Klimenko, and D. Proussakov. 1999. "Origins of Islam: Political-anthropological and environmental context." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 52: 243–276.

Kubiak, W. 1987. *Al-Fustat: Its foundation and early urban development*. Cairo.

Landau-Tasseron, E. 2005. "Jihad." In J. D. McAuliffe, ed., *The encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*. Vol. 3, 35–43. Leiden.

Mitchell, S. 2007. *A history of the later Roman empire, AD284–641*. Oxford.

Mochiri, M. I. 1981. "A Pahlavi forerunner of the Umayyad reformed coinage." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 113: 168–172.

Morabia, A. 1993. *Le jihâd dans l'Islam medieval*. Paris.

Morimoto, K. 1981. *The fiscal administration of Egypt in the early Islamic period*. Kyoto.

Morony, M. 1984. *Iraq after the Muslim conquest*. Princeton, NJ.

The First Islamic Empire

Nevo Y. and Koren, J. 2003. *Crossroads to Islam: The origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state*. Amherst, MA.

Puin, G. 1970. *Der Diwan von `Umar ibn al-Hattab: Ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte*. Bonn.

Robinson, C. F. 2000. *Empire and elites after the Muslim conquest: The transformation of northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge.

———. 2003. *Islamic historiography*. Cambridge.

———. 2005a. *‘Abd al-Malik*. Oxford.

———. 2005b. “Neck-sealing in early Islam.” *JESHO* 48: 401–444.

———. 2010. “The rise of Islam, 600–705.” In C. F. Robinson, ed., *The New Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. 1: *The formation of Islam, sixth to eleventh century*. Cambridge.

Sijpesteijn, P. 2007. “New rule over old structures: Egypt after the Muslim conquest.” In H. E. W. Crawford, ed., *Regime change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, 183–200. Oxford.

Simonsen, J. B. 1988. *Studies in the genesis and early development of the caliphal taxation system*. Copenhagen.

Walker, J. 2002. “The limits of late antiquity: Philosophy between Rome and Iran.” *Ancient World* 33: 45–69.

Walmsley, A. 2000. “Production, exchange and regional trade in the Islamic east Mediterranean: Old structures, new systems?” In I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham, eds., *The long eighth century*, 265–343. Leiden.

———. 2007. *Early Islamic Syria: An archaeological assessment*. London.

Wasserstein, D. 2003. “Why did Arabic succeed where Greek failed? Language change in the Near East after Muhammad.” *Scripta Classical Israelica* 22: 57–73.

Watt, W. M. 1964. *Muhammad, prophet and statesman*. Oxford.

Whitby, C. 1995. “Recruitment in Roman armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615).” In A. Cameron, ed., *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3: *States, resources and armies*, 61–124. Princeton. (p. 538)

Chase F. Robinson

Chase F. Robinson is Professor of History at the CUNY Graduate Center. He works on the early history of Islam and the Arab expansion.



Index

The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean

Edited by Peter Fibiger Bang and Walter Scheidel

Print Publication Date: Feb 2013 Subject: Classical Studies

Online Publication Date: Jan 2013

(p. 539) Index

A

Abbasid states. *See* Islamic empire

‘Abd al-Malik, 519, 528, 530, 532, 535

Abu Salabikh (Mesopotamia), 103

Achaemenid empire, 199–202, 208–15

Alexander’s conquest of, 324, 328, 333

Aramaic as lingua franca, 211, 212

coinage, 210

collapse of, 227, 329

compared with Umayyad achievement, 522–23

continuities in later empires, 334, 339

deportations, 212

dipolomacy, 209

economy, 211

Edomites and, 180

elites, 211

infrastructure and irrigation, 211

Jewish states and, 190

kingship and political structure, 208–9, 212–13

language, 211, 212, 213

laws and legal institutions, 213

military, 191, 209–10

new order of, 153

religion, 212

size of, 29

tribute, 210

Yehud and, 183

Achaians, 307, 311–18, 337

Adjudication, 21. *See also* Laws and legal institutions

Administrative power, 18

Aedileship (Roman empire), 393, 394

Index

Aegospotami, 298–99
Agathocles (Syracuse), 292
Agesilaos (Spartan), 290, 296
Agobard (bishop of Lyon), 506
The agrarian sociology of ancient civilizations (Weber), 63
Agrippa, Marcus, 185
Agrippa I, 187
Aiakid kingdom, 332
Aitolians, 308, 311, 312, 313, 314, 316, 319, 337
Akarnanian Oiniadai, 316
Akhenaten (Egypt), 78
Akkadia. *See* Mesopotamian empires; Near Eastern city-states
Akkadian language, 172
Akragas (Greece), 261, 285
Akropolis (Greek), 265
Alaric I (Goth), 499
Alexander IV (Hellenistic empire), 328
Alexander Jannaeus, 194
Alexander Severus, 415
Alexander the Great, 202, 210, 214, 227, 299–300, 311, 325, 326, 328, 333, 337, 428, 433
Alexandria, 261, 333, 344, 439, 484, 490
“Alluvial agriculture,” 69
Amasis (Egypt), 80, 81, 199
Ambrose, 515
Amenhotep III, 250
Amin, Samir, 23
Ammianus Marcellinus, 502
Amphiaraiion of Oropos, 319
Amphiktyonies (Greek), 307
Amphissaians, 308
Amun-Re at Karnak (Egypt), 88
Amyntas III of Macedon, 316
Amyzon (Seleucid), 341
Anatolian states, 161–79
Hittites, 161–77. *See also* Hittites
Phrygia, 177–78. *See also* Phrygia
Anderson, Benedict, 440
Andragoras (Parthia), 203
Andreski, Stanislav, 38
Andrejev, Yuri, 291
Anitta (Hittite), 162–63
Annals of Thutmose III (Egypt), 78
Anšan (Mesopotamia), 125
Anthropological study, 7, 12, 20
of Egypt, 63
Evans and, 236
heterachy, 25
inter-civilization contact, 35

Index

Antigonids, 329, 332, 333, 337, 339, 344, 350
Antigonos (“general of Asia”), 328, 329
Antigonos (Hasmonean king), 184, 192
Antigonos Gonatas, 329
Antioch, 484, 490
Antiochia, 261
Antiochos I (Seleucid), 343
Antiochos III (Seleucid), 203, 204
Antiochos IV (Seleucid), 329, 336–37, 343
Antiochos VII (Seleucid), 326–27
Antonine dynasty (Rome), 444, 446
Antonine plague, 444
Antoninus Pius, 204, 445t
Antony, Mark, 184, 185, 204, 344, 417, 422 (p. 540)
Apollo at Thermon, 319
Arabic language, 519, 533
Arabs, 208, 226, 227, 458, 475, 480, 483, 490. *See also* Islamic empire
Aramaic as lingua franca, 211, 212, 330, 534
Archaeology, 12
Byzantion, 484
Carthage, 362, 363, 373
Egyptian sites, 62, 72, 73, 77, 86
Germanic states, 514
Greece, 287, 293, 295, 333, 338
inter-civilization contact, 35
Iranian empires, 209
Jewish states, 183
Marwanids, 535
Mesopotamian empires, 121, 122, 124
Minoan Crete, 236, 237
Mycenaean centers, 242, 244, 245, 249, 252–53
Near Eastern city-states, 96, 97, 98, 101, 102, 106–8
Roman monarchy, 440, 443
Roman republic, 384
Archidamus, 296
Archontes (Byzantine), 485, 495
Ardashir (Sasanian), 205, 220, 223, 224, 227
Argos, 263, 273, 274, 279
Arianism, 511
Ariovistus (Germanic king), 428
Aristocracy, 19–20, 24. *See also* Elites
Carthage, 377–78, 380
European Middle Ages, 456
Germanic states, 509–12
Hellenistic empires, 330, 332–38, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 351–52
Roman monarchy, 427–38, 456
Aristotle, 62–65, 367, 369–71, 375
Arkadians, 264, 309, 311

Index

Armenia. *See* Parthian empire
Arsaces (Parthia), 203, 216
Arsacid-Parthian empire, 215–18
art and culture, 217–18
feudalism and, 215
kingship, 216
military, 215–16
religion, 217
Artabanus IV (Arsacid), 205
Art and culture
Arsacid-Parthian empire, 217–18
Greek city-states, 268
Mycenaean period states, 252
Artaxerxes I (Persia), 202
Artaxerxes II (Persia), 202
Artaxerxes III (Persia), 202
Artemis at Kalydon, 319
Artemis Elaphebolia at Hyampolis, 318
Asclepiades of Mendes, 433
Assassinations of Roman emperors, 435, 446, 447
Assemblies (Roman empire), 387–88
Assurnasirpal II (Mesopotamia), 140–41, 146, 149
Assyrian empire, 137–50
civil servants, 143
collapse of, 148–50
diplomatic letters from, 143, 149
in eastern Anatolia, 162
economy, structure, and policy, 141–45
institutional hierarchy, 145
invasion of Egypt, 79, 82
kingship, 147, 149
Late Assyrian Period, 152
laws and legal institutions, 144
local civic institutions, 145
merchants, 144
Middle Assyrian Period, 138, 144
military, 142
patron-client relations, 144
peace, 149
propaganda, 146–47
religion and rituals, 147, 294
slavery, 143, 152
taxation, 142
tributes, collection of, 142
violence, 145
writing, 142
Astyages (Median), 199
Athena at Alalkomenai, 319

Index

Athena Itonia at Boiotian Koroneia, 318
Athens
capital-intensive, 283, 292, 293
as city-state, 260, 263, 264, 268, 271, 272
cultural achievements, 296
economic services, 293
as empire, 279, 281*m*
military defeats of, 298
naval power, 284
religion and belief systems, 294
resident aliens, 288
slavery, 288
social customs, 288
Sparta vs., 290, 298, 299
subject cities, 289
taxes and government, 279, 291
victory over Persia, 284, 290
Atia (mother of Augustus), 433
Attalid kingdom, 327, 329, 333, 339, 343
Attika, 315
Attila, 458, 504
Augustus Caesar, 185, 187, 204, 327, 412–14, 417–23, 433
Aurelian (Roman emperor), 449
Aurelius, Marcus (Roman emperor), 446
Avidius Cassius, 204–5
Ayia Triada. *See* Crete
B
Babylon Epic of Creation, 107
Babylonians, 79, 123, 125, 127, 135–36, 150, 326
“Babylonian Talmud,” 225
Bagoas (Persia), 202
Baines, J., 236 (p. 541)
Baktria, 326, 343
Balance-of-power systems, 35
Balsam, 181
Ba’lu myth (Ugaritic), 111
Barbarians, 458, 498–502
Bar Kokhba Revolt (Judaea), 181, 217
Basileia (Hellenistic kingdom), 335–42
Battle of the Bridge (Arabs vs. Yazdgerd), 208
Bede, 503
Bertram of Le Mans, 512
Bikerman, E., 336, 343
Bisitun’s state power, 324–27
Blanton, Richard, 25
Blegen, C. W., 236
Boethius, 510
Boiotians, 307–11, 313–17, 319

Index

Bonney, Richard, 36
"Bread and circuses," 429
Breviary of Alaric, 506
Britain
imperial tradition in, 502
Rome's abandonment of, 459, 501
Rome's annexation of, 422, 446
Bruce Trigger, 13
Brumfield, Elizabeth, 7
Brutus, Marcus Iunius, 413
Bulgars, 481, 490
Bulk-goods networks, 34
Burbank, Jane, 27
Bureaucracy, 15, 83
Carthage, 369–70
Egypt, 73–76, 81–83, 85–86
Hellenistic empires, 342, 351
Islamic empire, 528, 533
late Roman states, 478
Mesopotamian empires, 127, 151
Roman monarchy, government without bureaucracy, 438
Burgundians, 459, 498, 499, 501, 502, 504, 505, 507, 510
Burke, Peter, 31
Butzer, Karl, 64
Byzantine empire, 475–97
apparatus of government, 476, 483–85
archontes, 485, 495
coinage, 487
collapse of, 491–94
Comnenian period, 487
economy, 487–88
elite-building compared to Ottoman *devshirme* (boys conscripted from Christian households for Janissary corps), 483
elites, 482, 485, 486, 488, 489, 492–94
emperor, 476
laws and legal institutions, 484
merchants, 492–93
military, 484, 486–87
political-historical overview, 480–82
political ideology, 488–91
political system, 482–83, 485
religion, 476, 488–91
ruralization, 484
size of, 475, 477*m*, 498
slavery, 479
surplus appropriation, 478–80, 482, 492
tax, 482, 484
themes, 484

Index

trade, 492–93
urbanism, 485–86
C
Caesarea, 185, 186
“Caging effect” on population, 72
Caius Marius, 409
Cales (Roman colony), 405
Caligula, 414, 424
Caliphal theory, 528–32
Cambyses (Persian), 82, 183, 199, 201, 296
Campanella, Tommaso, 434
Campus Martius, 391, 392, 412
Canaan, 95, 107
“Capital-intensive,” 36, 292, 293
Capitalism, 29, 36
Capstone government, 17
Caracalla (Roman emperor), 205, 439, 447
Carchemish, 167, 171, 176
Carians, 79, 81
Carneiro, Robert, 12
Carolingian Francia, 505, 508, 512, 514
Carthage, 361–82. *See also* Hannibal
citizenship, 367–68
city administration, 375–76
coinage, 377
councils, 370–71
defeat at Himera by Gelon, 285
diplomacy and treaties, 377
early history, 364–67
elites and aristocracy, 377–78, 380
hyparchoi, 368, 371
invasion of Sicily, 285
kingship, 364
lack of common identity, 380
laws and legal institutions, 380
magistrates and bureaucracy, 369–70
military and defense, 373–75, 376, 379
people’s assembly, 371
provisions, 377
religion, 375
revenue, 376–77
size of, 362, 362*m*, 364–65
sources on, 363–64
subject cities and peoples, 368–69
Syracuse vs., 292
taxes, 376
territorial administration, 371–73
urbanization, 375–76

Index

Utica, 368
wealth, 379
(p. 542)
Cassiodorus, 503–4, 505
Cassius Dio, 421, 423, 433
Catholic Church. *See* Christianity
Censuses, Roman, 442
Chaldean tribal confederation, 150
Chalkideis, 310, 311, 315, 316
Chariots
Carthaginian, 375, 376
Greek, 338
Hittite, 168
Mycenaean, 249–50
Charles V (Habsburg), 447
Chase-Dunn, Christopher, 33, 34
Chieftdoms, 10, 242
Chilperic I (Merovingian), 510, 512
China's Central Plain states, 10
Christian, David, 12–13, 17
Christianity
Catholic Church as official religion, 452–53
Germanic states turning to, 510–12
legal authority transferred to Church, 484, 489
monasteries, 511
monophysitism vs. dyophysite dogma, 478, 489
oath-taking and, 507
persecution of Christians, 205, 225, 452
Roman emperor's adoption of, 452–53
Citizenship
Carthage, 367–68
Greek city-states, 269
Greek multicity-states, 296–97
Roman monarchy, 421, 439
Roman republic, 403, 404
Citizen-state, 32
The City of the Sun (Campanella), 434
City-states, 30–32. *See also* Greek city-states; Near East city-states
defined, 95–96, 263
origin of, 15
Rome as, 404
Civil service, 7. *See also* Bureaucracy
Egypt, 86
Roman republic, 387
Civil war
Greek city-states, 273
Islamic empire, 529, 533
Merovingian, 508

Index

Roman monarchy, 415, 418, 424
Claessen, Henri, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 19
Class conflict, 37, 40, 398–401
Classes, emergence of, 14
Claudius, 414, 424
Clay tablets, 121, 172, 237, 246
Cleopatra, 344, 417, 422
Clovis, 503
“Coercion-extraction cycle,” 36
“Coercion-intensive,” 36, 283, 292
Cohen, Ronald, 6, 13
Coinage
Achaemenid empire, 210–11
Byzantine empire, 487
Carthage, 377
Egypt, 81, 82
Greek *koinon*’s cooperative coinage, 309, 317
Hellenistic empires, 330, 345–46
Islamic empire, 519, 531, 533, 534
Roman monarchy, 446, 450
Cola di Rienzo, 431
Collective action, 45nn131–32
Collins, Randall, 40
Comes (Burgundian), 505
Comitia curiata, 387–88
Commercialization and types of states, 15
Comnenian period (Byzantine), 487
Conflict theory, 11, 12, 37
Constantine the Great, 449, 450, 452–53, 510
Constantine V, 490
Constantinople, 452, 454, 459, 475, 478, 481, 484, 489–90. *See also* Byzantine empire
Constitution of Kyrene (Greek), 269
Constitutions
Greek city-states, 269–70
Roman republic, 384–86, 397, 408
Consulship, Roman, 386, 388, 392, 394, 395, 397, 431
Cooper, Frederick, 27
Coordination problem, 69
Copenhagen Polis Centre’s *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, 305
Corinth, 263, 284, 289, 290, 297
Corpus Juris Civilis, 452
Cradle of civilization, 97, 149
Crassus, 204, 418
Crete, 236–42. *See also* Mycenaean period states
destruction and supposed Mycenaean invasion, 243
fifteenth-century BCE and Mycenaean mainland, 242–43
Neopalatial period, 241, 242, 243
Protopalatial period, 241

Index

size and shape of Minoan states, 241–42
state structure and organization, 239–41, 240t
Croesus (Lydian), 199
Crone, Patricia, 9, 16–17
Cults. *See* Religion
Curiae (Roman empire), 387
Currency. *See* Coinage
Cursus honorum (Roman empire), 397
Cyprus, 327
Cyrus (Persia), 183, 199, 294, 296–97, 299
Cyrus the Younger (Persia), 202
D
Dacia, Rome's annexation of, 422
Darius (Persia), 82, 201, 212, 214, 296, 325
Darius II (Persia), 202, 209, 299
Darius III (Persia), 202 (p. 543)
Darwinian theory, 12
David (biblical), 181
Davidides (biblical), 183, 193
Dead Sea scrolls, 193
Debt-bondage, 402
Deities. *See* Religion
Delian League, 202, 273, 274
Demetrios (Macedonia), 328, 329
Demetrius the Besieger, 300
Democracy, 270, 290, 297–98, 399
Demosthenes, 312
Demotic Chronicle, 82
Deportations
Achaemenid empire, 212
Assyrian empire, 138, 148, 152
Persian empire, 212
Sasanian empire, 222, 225
Description of the poleis in Greece (Herakleides Kretikos), 316
Desiderius of Cahors, 509
Despotic power, 18
Egypt, 63–64, 68–69
Roman monarchy, 448
Devshirme (Christian boys conscripted for Janissary), 483
“Dialogue of Pessimism,” 146
Diamond, Jared, 10, 11
Dioceses, 450, 478
Diocletian (Roman emperor), 205, 415, 449, 450, 453
Diodorus, 287, 288, 293
Dionysius (Syracuse), 285, 291, 292, 293, 296
Dionysius II (Syracuse), 289, 296
Diplomacy
Achaemenid empire, 209

Index

Assyrian empire, 143, 149
Carthage, 377
Greek city-states, 274–75
Hittites, 170–71
Persians, 209
Roman monarchy, 427–28
Roman republic, 404
Discourses on the Gods (Asclepiades of Mendes), 433
Distribution role of state, 21
Dobson, Brian, 423
Domitian, 424, 443, 444
Donner, H., 364
Dorians, 295
Downing, Brian, 37
Doyle, Michael, 27, 28, 29
Driessen, J., 250
E
Earle, Timothy, 9
Early hydraulic civilization in Egypt: A study in cultural ecology (Butzer), 64
Early-modern military mobilization, 420*t*, 421
Early state
defined, 6
end of, 14–15
Earthquakes, 253, 490
Ebla (Mesopotamia), 103
Ebroin (Francia), 510
Economy
Achaemenid empire, 211
Assyrian empire, 141–45
Byzantine empire, 487–88
Germanic states, 512–14
Greek city-states, 271
Greek *koinon*, 315–17
Hellenistic empires, 339, 346–48, 347*f*, 350
Hittites, 175
Near Eastern city-states, 113, 113*f*
Sasanian empire, 222
Ecumene, 440, 453
Edomites, 180
Egypt, 61–105
Alexandria capital, 84
annexation by Rome, 327
bureaucracy, 73–76, 81–83, 85–86
current trends in study of, 62–64
delegational systems, 85
development of state, 72–75
“dodecarchy,” 78
dynasties and dynastic cycles, 71–72

Index

First Intermediate Period (2160–2055 BCE), 68, 75
fourth millennium BCE, 72–73
Hierakonpolis, 72, 86
Hyksos kings, 76
irrigation, 63, 64, 68–70, 72
kingship and administration, 62, 64–65, 84–86
law and legal institutions, 88
Memphis capital, 74, 81, 82, 86
Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BCE), 61, 68, 75–84
military, 77, 79, 84
models of understanding, 64–65
monetization of, 81, 82
New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE), 61, 63, 68, 76
Nile River and irrigation, 68–70
nomarchs, 75–76, 86, 87
nomes, 85, 86–87
Old Kingdom (2686–2160 BCE), 68, 73–75
parameters and boundaries, 65–68, 66–67*m*
Persian Rule (525–404, 343–332 BCE), 65, 82–83
“pharaoh,” 64–65
political economy, 64
prehistory, 70–71
property rights, 88
Ptolemies. *See* Ptolemies
religion, 80, 84, 85
Roman rule, 422, 431, 433, 442, 476
Saite Restoration (664–525 BCE), 61, 68, 79–82
Second Intermediate Period (1650–1550 BCE), 68, 76–78 (p. 544)
sources in study of, 62–64
state centralization, first phases of, 73
taxation, 85
temples, 87–88
Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 BCE), 78–79
trade, 72, 73, 80, 81, 82
urbanization, 86–87
viceroy’s role, 77
vizier’s role, 74, 88
warmaking, 73, 78, 84
“Egyptological” model, 65
Eich, Armin, 38, 291
Eich, Peter, 38
Eisenstadt, Shmuel, 15, 29, 425
Eisphora (Greek levy for military), 317
Elam, 124, 125, 126, 136–37, 141, 149
Elections (Roman republic), 397
Elias, Norbert, 432
Elites, 16–19. *See also* Class conflict
achaemenid empire, 211

Index

Akkadian empire, 130–31
Arabs, 526–33, 527
Byzantine empire, 482, 485, 486, 488, 489, 492–94
Carthage, 377–78, 380
city-states and, 32
Egypt, 62, 64, 65, 70–75, 78, 81–83, 85–86
empires and, 27–28
Germanic successor states, 503
Greece in Bronze Age, 239–40, 243, 246, 248, 250–52, 254
Greek city-states, 270
Greek multicity states, 285–86, 289, 296, 299
Hellenistic empires, 330, 332–38, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 351–52
Hittites, 172, 175, 176
Mesopotamian empires, 133, 138, 139, 142–46, 151–53
Near Eastern city-states, 100, 102, 107–9, 111, 112, 114–16
Phrygia, 126
ritual and priestly elites, 22, 133
Roman monarchy, 415, 417, 429–30, 433–36, 438–42, 449, 453, 455–58
Roman republic, 395–401, 406–10
Sasanian empire, 221
state-elite relations, 22–25, 38–39
Ember, Carol and Melvin, 11
The emergence of civilisation (Renfrew), 236
Empires, 15, 27–30, 127. *See also specific empires*
Engel, Friedrich, 11
Enkidu (Epic of Gilgamesh), 106
Epic of Gilgamesh, 105–6, 110
Equestrian branch, 425, 430–31, 437, 446
Eretria, 263
Eridu (Mesopotamia), 106
Ertman, Thomas, 37
Eternal Peace (Justinian), 207
Eternal Treaty (Hittites and Egyptians), 171
Ethnos (Greece), 264, 304, 307
Etruscan city-states, 31, 292, 403
Euagoras (Salaminian king), 202
Eucharisticos (Paulinus of Pella), 501
Euergetism, 185, 186, 187
Eumenes II (Attalid ruler), 329
Eunuchs, 17, 140, 143, 429
Eurasia and Muslim-Chinese war, 522
Evans, Arthur, 236
Extraction, 10, 20, 23, 25, 26, 35–38, 112, 124, 130, 141, 151, 286, 290–2, 324, 330, 338, 342–47, 351, 407, 456–7, 483, 489. *See also* Taxation and tribute extraction; Tribute
Eyre, C. J., 69
Ezra (biblical), 183
F
Fabius Pictor, 384

Index

Fargher, Lane, 25
Farrukhan (Sasanian general), 224
Fatimids, 491
Federalism, 32
Federal state or league. *See* Greek *koinon*
Fertile Crescent, 10, 34, 95–96
Feudal society, 70
Finer, Samuel, 7, 15, 27, 35–36
Finley, Moses, 236
First Punic War, 372
Fission, 10, 45n132
Flaig, Egon, 432
Flavian dynasty, 439
Forma et Expositio Legum, 506
Formula togatorum (Roman empire), 404
Francia. *See* Carolingian Francia
Frank, André, Gunder, 35
Franks, 459, 498, 502–4
Fried, Morton, 7, 9
G
Galaty, M. L., 239
Galilee, 181, 184
Galtung, Johan, 28
Gat, Azar, 31
Gaul, warfare in fifth century, 513
Gellner, Ernest, 15, 16, 19, 23, 69, 70, 430, 440
Gelon (Syracuse), 285, 288, 292
Generic states, 15
Germanic soldiers in Roman army, 458
Germanic successor states, 498–517
Campus Martius (March Field), 509
economic conditions, 512–14
elites, 503
establishment and nature of “barbarian” kingdoms, 498–502
kingdoms, 502–4
laws and legal institutions, 506–7
military and taxation, 458–59, 507–9
nobility and church, 509–12 (p. 545)
property rights, 501
Roman continuities, 459, 504–7
trade, 513
Germano-Roman kingdoms, 458–59
Germany, Rome’s attempted annexation of, 422
Geta (Roman emperor), 447
Giddens, Anthony, 15, 18, 22
Gift-giving in Hellenistic empires, 344
Gilgamesh. *See* Near Eastern city-states
Gods. *See* Religion

Index

Goldstone, Jack, 6, 18, 22, 27, 28, 38–39, 293
Gordian I and II (Roman emperors), 448
Goths. *See* Ostrogoths; Visigoths
Governors. *See also* Satraps
city, 74, 82, 108, 131, 134, 345
Islamic empire, 530, 533
provincial and regional, 125, 126, 130, 134, 135, 138, 140, 142–43, 171, 183, 220, 325, 337, 407, 431, 436–37, 447–48, 450, 530, 533–34
Roman provinces, 436–37
Great Pyramid at Giza, 74
Great Satraps Revolt (Persia), 202
Greece in Bronze Age, 236–58
chiefdoms, 242
collapse of, 252–54
elites, 239–40, 243, 246, 248, 250–52, 254
fifteenth-century BCE Crete and Mycenaean mainland, 242–43
map, 238*m*
Minoan states on Crete, 237–42. *See also* Crete
Mycenaean period states, 243–52. *See also* Mycenaean period states
Shaft Grave period, 242
Greek city-states, 259–78
Archaic period, 260, 268, 270
art and culture, 268
citizenship, 269
civil war (*stasis*), 273
Classical period, 259, 260, 264, 265, 268, 270, 271
constitutions, 269–70
dependent poleis, 274
diplomacy, 274–75
economic and social life, 271
elites, 270
federations, formation of, 274–75. *See also* Greek *koinon*
finance, 272
government and political organization, 269–70
Hellenistic period, 260, 264, 265, 270, 272
housing, 265
laws and legal institutions, 268
military, 271
polis, extent and size of, 31, 259–64, 261–62*m*
polis as a city, 264–68
polis as a state, 268–72
relationship between poleis, 273–75
religion, 268, 271–72
Roman period, 264, 270, 272
wars between poleis, 273–74
Greek *koinon*, 304–23
coercion, cooperation, and negotiation, 310–12
coinage, 309, 317

Index

ecology and economy, 315–17
interdependence of polis and *koinon*, 312–15
laws and legal institutions, 314–15
legitimation, identity, and religious practice, 317–19
map of, 305*m*
military, 311, 314
origins and development, 306–10
property rights, 315
taxes, 316–17
Greek language, 243, 330, 439, 519, 534
Greek multicity states, 279–303. *See also* Athens; Sparta; Syracuse
Archaic Period, 279
citizenship, 296–97
Classical Period, 279
collapse of, 298–99
cultural particularism, 298
documentation and sources, 286–87
domination vs. exploitation, 283
economic services, 292–93
elites, 285–86, 289, 296, 299
military power and resource extraction, 290–92
phoros (tax), 283, 290–91
political systems, coopertion, adjudication, and enforcement, 287–90
religion and belief systems, 294–95, 298
Sicilian settlements, 282*m*, 283–85
state formation in first-millennium BCE, 281–86
symbolic integration and identity, 295–97
warfare, 282
wealth, 293, 298
Gregory of Tours, 503, 513
Gregory the Great, 510
Griffeth, Robert, 286
H
Hadrian, 204, 436
Haggai (biblical), 183
Haldon, John, 6, 18, 22–23, 24, 27, 28
Hall, John, 16
Hall, Thomas, 33, 34, 38
Hamilkar (Carthaginian king), 365, 366
Hammurabi (Babylonian king), 114, 116, 125, 133, 163
Hannibal, 367, 370, 401, 418
Hanno (Carthaginian king), 365
Hansen, Mogens, 6, 30, 286
Hantili (Hittite), 164
Hasmonean kingdom, 184, 185, 192, 193, 194–95
Hattus/Hattusa (Hittite), 163, 167, 170, 173–74, 175, 177
Hattusili I (Hittite), 163, 164, 168, 169
Hattusili III (Hittite), 166, 171, 173 (p. 546)

Index

Hayek, Friedrich, 315
Hegemony, 27
Assyrian, 138, 145, 148
Babylonian, 150
Iranian, 227
Mesopotamian, 104, 125, 127
Roman hegemony in Italy, 402–6
Roman hegemony in Mediterranean, 417–27, 444
Helck, W., 78
Hellas. *See* Greek city-states
Hellenika (Xenophon), 287
Hellenistic empires, 324–57. *See also* Macedonians; Ptolemies; Seleucids
basileia (Hellenistic kingdom) and kingship, 335–42
bureaucracy, 342, 351
conspicuous consumption, 344
currency, 345–46
diversity opportunity, 349
economy, 339, 346–48, 347*f*, 350
elites and aristocracy, 330, 332–38, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 351–52
Friends and royal court, 334, 336–37, 338, 340, 342, 346
gift-giving, 344
laws and legal institutions, 345
map of, 331*m*
narrative, genealogy, and structure, 327–35
nature of states, 351–52
property rights, 340
religion, 342
social history, 348–51
stability, 347
state power, 324–27, 350
taking, spending, and embedding, 342–46
taxes, 339, 343, 345, 349
warfare and military, 338, 343
wealth, 340, 344
Hephthalites, 207
Heraclius (Roman emperor), 208, 480, 526
Herakleia (Seleucid), 341
Herakleides Kretikos, 316
Herakles Kallinikos at Bisitun, 324–27
Herlihy, David, 512
Herod (Judaean), 184–85, 192, 193, 194
Herodian, 448
Herodotus, 62, 63, 65, 78, 80, 82, 210, 280, 283, 287, 291, 293, 365
“Heterarchy,” 25
Hieroglyphics, 81, 172, 236
Hieron I (Syracuse), 292, 296
Hieron II (Syracuse), 286
Hilakku kingdom, 176

Index

Himera, battle of, 365, 366
Hintze, Otto, 36
Hippocrates (Gela), 285
Hippodamos of Miletos, 264, 265
Hisham (caliph), 519
Histories (Herodotus), 62, 63, 65
Hittites, 161–77
 acquisition of empire, 167–69
 administration of the kingdom, 171–75
 collapse of, 176
 diplomacy and treaties, 170–71
 economy, 175
 elite, 172, 175, 176
 historical background, 161–64
 laws and legal institutions, 173–74
 maintenance of empire, 169–71
 map of empire, 162*m*
 military and warfare, 167–70
 neo-Hittite successors, 176–77
 role of the gods, 166–67
 royal dynasty and kingship, 164–66, 167
 scribes and writing, 172–73
 slavery, 174
 trade, 175
Homer, 177, 236, 252, 253, 254
Hormezd IV (Sasanian king), 207
Horus of Edfu (Egypt), 84
Howe, Stephen, 27
Hui, Victoria, 38
Hume, 176
Huns, 207, 458
Huntington, S. P., 414
Hyakinthos, 324–26
Hyksos kings, 76
Hyparchoi (Carthage), 368, 371
I
Iconoclasm, 489–90
Iliad (Homer), 177, 253
Imperialism, 28–29, 77. *See also* Empires
Indus Valley, 10
Information networks (IN), 34, 35
Infrastructure
 Achaemenid empire, 211
 communication and transport 19, 22, 25, 129, 141, 143, 148, 171, 211, 222, 375, 405, 407, 426, 479, 527, 535
 power and organization, 18, 22, 24, 37, 126, 138, 140, 149–50, 290, 414, 426
 Roman, 405, 426
 Sasanian empire, 222

Index

Les Institutions des Séleucides (Bikerman), 336
Integrative theories of state development, 11-12
Interior states, 33
Interstate conflict, 37
Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis (Copenhagen Polis Centre), 305
Ionians, 79, 201, 295, 307, 318
Iranian empires, 199-231
 Achaemenid empire, 199-202, 208-15. *See also* Achaemenid empire
 Arsacid-Parthian empire, 215-18
 comparative perspective, 226-28
 cultural and ethnic diversity in, 227 (p. 547)
 Hellenistic times, 203
 Parthian empire, 203-5. *See also* Parthian empire
 Sasanian empire, 205-8, 218-26. *See also* Sasanian empire
 wars with Rome, 519
Iron Age, 176
Irrigation
 Achaemenid empire, 211
 Byzantine empire, 483
 Egypt, 63, 64, 68-70, 72
 state development and, 10, 11
 Urartu, empire of, 126
Isaiah, book of, 296
Ishtar (Hittites), 166
Isidore (historian), 503
Isis (Egypt), 81
Islamic empire, 518-37
 bureaucracy, 528, 533
 civil wars, 529, 533
 coinage, 519, 531, 533, 534
 early caliphate, 528-32
 elites, 526-33
 merchants, 527
 military, 532
 religion, 521, 525-26, 534
 size of, 519, 520m
 slavery, 527
 systematization of rules, 532-35
 taxes, 531-32
 trade, 527
 tribal conquests and Muslim belief, 523-28
Israel, kingdom of, 181
Italian merchants and commerce, 492-94
Izates (king of Adiabene), 217
J
 Jacobsen, Thorkild, 110
 Jason (high priest of Jerusalem), 184
 Jericho, 97, 195

Index

Jerusalem, 180, 185, 188, 490
Jerusalem temple, 184, 185, 186, 187, 433
destruction of, 187, 188, 426
rebuilding of, 297
Jewish Antiquities (Josephus), 185
Jewish states, 180–98
Achaemenid empire and, 190
diaspora, 189, 194
ethnos and state, 189
geography, 180–81, 182*m*
Hasmonean state and Herod, 194–95
Hellinistic empire and, 351
history, 181–87
military, 191–92
origins and phenomenology, 188–89
political ideology and praxis, 189–91
resistance and repression, 193–94, 426
Jewish War/Rebellion (Josephus), 185, 421, 424, 426
Jews in Egypt, 81
John Hyrcanus I, 192
Johnson, Allen, 9
Jones, A. H. M., 454
Jordanes (historian), 503
Josephus (Jewish historian), 184, 185, 188, 193–94
Judaea. *See* Jewish states
Judah, kingdom of, 181, 183
Julian the Apostate (Roman emperor), 205
Julius Caesar, 204, 413, 428, 430, 502
Junius Brutus, 384
Justinian (Roman emperor), 207, 417, 480, 505, 519
Justinian Code, 507
Justinianic Code, 417, 457, 460, 506
K
Kassander (Greek), 311
Kassite kings, 125, 135, 136, 152
Kaufman, Herbert, 35
Kautsky, John, 15, 16, 19, 22, 24
Kawad (Sasanian king), 207
Kayanids (Iranian), 224
Keegan, John, 329
Kemp, B. J., 78
Khusistan, 31
Khusro I (Sasanian king), 207, 221, 222, 225–26
Khusro II (Sasanian king), 207, 208, 223, 226
Kings (biblical books), 181
Kingship
Achaemenid empire, 208–9, 212–13
Arsacid-Parthian empire, 216

Index

Carthage, 364
Egypt, 62, 64–65, 84–86
Hellenistic empires, 335–42
Hittites, 164–66
Jewish states, 190
Near Eastern city-states, 107–10
Persian, 208–9, 212–13
Roman monarchy, 431–35
Sasanian empire, 218, 220–22, 226
“The king’s Peace” (Artaxerxes II), 202
Kinship ties, 14, 530
Kleomenes (supergovernor), 325, 326
Knossos. *See* Crete; Mycenaean period states
Koinon. *See* Greek *koinon*
Komnenos dynasty, 493
Kyrene (Greece), 261
Kyrene Constitution (Greece), 269
L
Labarna (Hittite), 163, 165
Lactantius, 453
Lagash. *See* Near Eastern city-states
Lane, Frederic C., 20, 21, 419, 444
Languages
Achaemenid empire, 211, 212, 213
Arabic, 519, 533 (p. 548)
Aramaic, 211, 212, 330, 534
Greek, 243, 330, 439, 478, 519, 534
Hittites, 172, 177
Latin, 439, 519, 534
Mycenaean period, 251
Pahlavi, 519
Persian, 211, 212, 213, 534
Phrygians, 178
Punic, 380
“Rosetta Stone,” 334
Larsen, Jakob, 306
Late Bronze Age, 153, 161, 163–64, 171, 172, 177, 236, 250
Late Paleolithic period, 71
Later Roman empire (Jones), 454
Latin city-states, 31, 406
Latin language, 439, 519, 534
Latin League, 405
Laws and legal institutions
Achaemenid empire, 213
Byzantine empire, 484
Carthage, 380
Egypt, 88
Germanic states, 506–7

Index

Greek city-states, 268
Greek *koinon*, 314–15
Hellenistic empires, 345
Hittites, 173–74
Jewish states, 189
Near Eastern city-states, 114–16
Roman monarchy, 432, 452
Roman republic, 391–92, 398, 400
Laws of Hammurabi, 114
Lanski, Gerhard, 23
Leo III, 490
Leontini, 285
Leovigild (Visigoth king), 502
Lex Claudia, 407
Lex curiata, 387
Lex de imperio Vespasiani, 431–32
Lex Gundobada, 507
Lex Poetilia, 402
Lex Ribvaria, 506
Lex Romana Burgundionum, 506
Lex Villia annalis, 397
Li, Rebecca, 40
Liber Iudiciorum, 506
Libyans, 77, 79, 372
Lieberman, Victor, 27
Lipsius, J., 414
Livy, 332
Lokrians, 274, 308
Lombards, 480, 498, 502–4, 510, 511, 513
Lower Paleolithic period, 70
Luxury laws (Roman), 400
Lydian empire, 126, 199, 274, 299
Lykians, 311
Lysander, 290, 299
M
Macedonians, 184, 299, 311, 326, 330–33, 340. *See also* Alexander the Great; Hellenistic empires
Machiavelli, 415
MacMullen, R., 454
Macrinus, 425
Magistrates (Roman), 386–87
Magnesia, battle of (Seleucids vs. Romans), 338
Maisels, Charles, 31
Managerial theories of state development, 11, 12–13
Manetho (Egypt), 62, 75
Manicheans, 225
Mann, Michael, 6, 18, 22, 24–25, 29, 63, 71, 72, 85, 438
Marathon (defeat of Persians), 201
Marcher states, 33, 40, 458

Index

March Field (Franks), 509
Marcus, Joyce, 31
Mari (Mesopotamia), 103, 104
Marwanids, 528, 530, 532
Marxist theory, 11
Masada, 426
Maurice (Roman emperor), 480
Maximinus Thrax, 447, 448
Mazdakites, 207, 225
Mehmet II (Ottoman sultan), 475
Melkites of Palestine, 534
Melos, Athenian destruction of, 274
Menexenus (Plato), 296
Merchants
 Assyrian empire, 144
 Byzantine empire, 492–93
 Islamic empire, 527
 Italian commerce, 492–94
 Mesopotamian empires, 128
 Merovingians, 502–3, 505, 508
 Merv (Iranian town), 518, 524, 530
 Mesopotamian city-states. *See* Near Eastern city-states
 Mesopotamian empires, 120–60
 Assyrian empire, 137–50. *See also* Assyrian empire
 benefits of, 151
 bureaucracy, 127, 151
 core provinces, 132–33
 early empires, 129–33
 elites, 133, 138, 139, 142–46, 151–53
 imperialism, 122–29
 “magnates,” 140
 map of, 132*m*, 136*m*, 139*m*
 merchants, 128
 military, 127, 130
 networks, tribes, and regional states, 133–37
 oscillation from political fragmentation and central rule, 123–26, 123*f*
 royal court, 131 (p. 549)
 taxes, 127
 trade, 127–29, 131
 writing, 121
Messenia (Spartan), 283, 284
Metaethnic frontiers, 33
Metrocentric theories, 29
Micro-state, 30. *See also* City-states
Midas/Mita (Mushki king), 178
Middle Assyrian Laws, 144
Middle Bronze Age, 162, 168
Middle Paleolithic period, 71

Index

Miletus, 284
Military. *See also* Naval power
Achaemenid empire, 191, 209–10
Byzantine empire, 484, 486–87
Carthage, 373–75, 376, 379
Egypt, 77, 79, 84
Greek city-states, 271
Greek *koinon*, 311, 314
Hittites, 167–70
Mesopotamian empires, 127, 130
Near Eastern city-states, 115
Parthians, 216
Persians, 209–10
Roman monarchy, 413, 414, 415, 417–27, 419*t*, 428, 445*t*, 454–55, 455*t*
Roman republic, 391–93, 400–401, 402, 404, 409
Sasanian empire, 223
state militarism, 29
Millar, Fergus, 434
Minoan states on Crete (ca. 2000–1700 BCE). *See* Crete
Mishnah, 225
Mitanni empire, 125, 137, 152, 164, 168, 169
Mithridates I (Parthian king), 204
Mithridates II (Parthian king), 204, 216
Mithridates VI (Pontus king), 418
Monasteries, 511
Money. *See* Coinage
Mongols, 29, 523, 526
Monophysitism, 478, 489
Monotheism, 188, 453, 523
Monson, Andrew, 33
Montesquieu, 430
Montuemhat (Egypt), 80
Morgan, Catherine, 306
Morris, Ian, 6, 32
Motya, 292
Motyl, Alexander, 27, 28, 30, 39–40
Mu`awiya, 528–29, 532
Mughal armies, 426
Muhammad, 525, 528
Mursili I (Hittite), 163, 164, 168, 169
Mursili II (Hittite), 174
Mushki (Phrygian), 177
Muslims. *See* Arabs; Byzantine empire; Islamic empire
Muwattalli II (Hittite), 168, 173
Mycenaean period states (ca. 1400–1200 BCE), 243–52
art and culture, 252
collapse of, 252–53, 281
economy and bureaucracy, 248–49

Index

kingship and aristocrats, 246–47, 252
military, 247, 250
religion, 251
size and shape of, 244–45
state representation and communication, 250–51
N
Nabataeans, 185
Narseh (Sasanian king), 219, 220
National states, 15
Nation-state vs. state, 8
Natural History (Pliny the Elder), 433
Naupaktos, 316
Naval power
Athens, 284
Carthage, 374, 376
Hellenistic empires, 338
Roman empire, 422
Sparta, 290
Syracuse, 284, 291
Naxos, 289
Near Eastern city-states, 94–119
administration of integrated economy, 111–14
collapse of, 116–17
definition of city-state, 95–96
development of, 97–105
Early Dynastic Period, 103, 104, 108
economy, 113, 113*f*
elites, 100, 102, 107–9, 111, 112, 114–16
household as essential socioeconomic unit, 111
ideology of urban life, 105–7
kingship and other governmental institutions, 107–10
Lagash-Umma border conflict, 104, 114
Late Bronze Age (1600–1200 BCE), 105
legal system, 114–16
map of city-states, 98*m*
military, 115
organization of, 124
professions, 102
size of, 102–3
slavery, 112–13
sources for study of, 96–97
standard periods, 99*t*
trade, 98
Ubaid period, 98, 99*t*, 100
Uruk period, 99*t*, 100, 101, 112
Necho II (Egypt), 80
Nedao, Battle of (Attila's defeat), 504
Nefedov, Sergey, 38, 39, 61

Index

Nehemiah (biblical), 183
Neo-Hittite kingdoms, 176–77
Neo-Malthusian model, 39 (p. 550)
Nero, 204, 414, 424, 443
Nesa (Hittite), 162
Nesite language, 172
“Nestorian” creed, 225
Nicaean council, 453
Nippur, 99, 101, 135
Nitocris (Egypt), 80
Nobilitas (Roman), 395–98, 400
Nomadic states, 45n132
Nomarchs (Egypt), 75–76, 86, 87
Nomes (Egypt), 85, 86–87
North, Douglass, 17, 21
Nubia, 73–77, 79, 82
Numidia, 448
O
Oath-taking, 507
Obsidian, 98
O’Connor, D., 75
Oea (city in Roman world), 427
Oiniades of Sciathos, 296
Oligarchy, 270, 398
Olynthos, 310, 311
Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power (Wittfogel), 63
Orientalism, 62
Ormrod, Mark, 36
Osroes (Armenian king), 204
Ostrogoths, 459, 480, 498–504
Ottoman empire, 457, 491
Ottoman janissaries, 426
Oxyrhynchus Historian, 313
P
Pabag (Sasanian king), 205, 220, 224
Pahlavi language, 519
Palermo Stone, 73
Palestine. *See* Jewish states
Palmyra, 427, 447
Pamboiotia (Greek festival featuring equestrian competitions), 318
Panionion (Greek), 307
Pantauchos (Greek), 325
Parkinson, W. A., 239
Parthian empire, 184, 203–5, 206m, 216, 326, 418, 446
“Parthian shot,” 216
Pater familias, authority of, 391
Paulinus of Pella, 501
Pax Romana, 273, 417, 419, 422–23, 444

Index

Peace of Antalkidas (Plataians), 310
“The Peace of Disgrace” at Nisibis (Sasanian-Roman), 205
Peer-polity interaction, 236
Peloponnesian War, 273, 274
People’s assembly (Carthage), 371
Pepi II (Egypt), 74–75
Peregrine, Peter, 11
Pericentric theories, 29
Pericles, 296
Peroz (Sasanian king), 207
Persepolis, 201, 212
Perseus (Antigonid), 332, 350
Persia. *See* Iranian empires
Pertinax, 446
Petrie, Flinders, 62
Phaistos. *See* Crete
Pharaohs (Egypt), 64–65
Philip II of Macedon, 299, 316, 328, 337
Philip III (Hellenistic), 328
Philip V (Antigonid), 332
Philistines, 180
Philology, 62
Phocas (Roman emperor), 480
Phoenicians, 81, 95, 105, 128, 144, 361
Phokian federation (Greek), 274, 309, 316, 318
Phraates IV (Armenia), 204
Phrygia, 126, 176, 177–78
Piracy, 366
Piraeus (port of Athens), 265
Pithana (Hittite), 162
Piye (Nubian king), 79, 80
Plagues, 444, 513–14
Plataia, 310, 315
Plato, 260, 296
Plebiscita (Roman empire), 393
Pliny the Elder, 215, 433
Pliny the Younger, 428
Plutarch, 287, 291
“Poem of the Righteous Sufferer,” 146
Poggi, Gianfranco, 7, 24
Polis. *See* Greek city-states
Polis (Hansen), 286
Politeia (as citizenship and constitution), 190, 263, 269, 363
Political/military networks (PMN), 34
Political structure. *See* Government and political structure
Politics (Aristotle), 62, 63
Polybios of Megalopolis, 304, 320, 325, 332, 364, 367, 398
Polykrates of Samos, 81

Index

Pompey's conquest of Palestine, 184
Pontius Pilate, 431
Population growth
in Egypt, 83, 84
in Roman empire, 444, 445*t*, 455
Populus, role of (Roman empire), 386, 387, 388, 399
Porter, Bruce, 22, 37
Poseidon at Helike, 307, 318
Poseidon at Onchestos, 319
Poseidon Helikonios at Mykale, 307, 318
Praetorian guard, 424–25
Prestige goods networks (PGN), 34, 35
Priesthood. *See* Religion
The Proclamation of Telipinu, 165
Procuratorships, 431, 446
Production role of state, 21 (p. 551)
Property rights
Church and monasticism, 511–12
Egypt, 88
Germanic successor states, 513
German states, 501
Greek *koinon*, 315
Hellenistic empires, 340
Roman land confiscations from defeated opponents, 405
Protection as state role, 22
city-state role, 31, 37
Near Eastern city-states, 106, 122, 144
Roman military serving as. *See* Military
taxes as payment for, 20–21, 419, 444. *See also* Lane, Frederic C.; Taxation and tribute
extraction; Tribute
Protection rent, 20
Psammetichus (Egypt), 79, 80, 81, 201
Pseudo-Skylax (Greek geographer), 260
Ptolemaios, 345, 350
Ptolemies, 65, 68, 83–84, 191–92, 203, 327, 329, 332–34, 337–39, 342, 344
Ptolemy II, 343
Ptolemy V, 334
Ptolemy VI, 327
Ptolemy VIII, 327
Public goods, 25–26
Puduhepa (Hittite), 166–67, 173
Pylos, 244, 247, 250, 252, 253. *See also* Mycenaean period states
Pyramids, 74
Pyrrhus of Epirus, 285, 292
Q
Qadesh, battle of (Hittites vs. Egyptians), 168, 171
R
Ramesses II (Egypt), 168, 171

Index

Rasler, Karen, 37
Ray, J., 82
Reccared (Visigoth king), 502
Recruits' gold, 457
Religion, 19. *See also* Christianity
Achaemenid empire, 212
Arsacid-Parthian empire, 217
Byzantine empire, 476, 488–91
Carthage, 375
Egypt, 80, 84, 85
Germanic states, 510–12
Greek city-states, 268, 271–72
Greek *koinon*, 317–19
Hellenistic empires, 342
Hittites, 166–67
Islamic empire, 521, 525–26, 534
Judaism, 183, 188, 190–91
Roman monarchy, 434, 452–53
Roman republic, 389–90
Sasanian empire, 205, 207, 224, 225
Renfrew, C., 236
Res publica (Roman republic), 390, 400
Reynolds, Susan, 27
Rhandaia, treaty of (Armenian conflict), 204
Rhaphia, battle of (Fourth Syrian War), 337, 338
Rollig, W., 364
Roman-Carthaginian treaty (500), 365, 372
Roman empire
monarchy. *See* Roman monarchy
republic. *See* Roman republic
size of, 29, 385*m*, 416*m*, 451*m*
Roman monarchy, 412–72
assassinations, 435, 446, 447
“bread and circuses,” 429
censuses, 442
citizenship, 421, 439
civil wars, 415, 418, 424
coinage, 446, 450
collapse of, 458–59, 475–76
consulship, 431
cosmopolitan elite, 440, 447
dioceses, 450
dominate, 415
ecumene, 440, 453
elites, 415, 417, 429–30, 433–36, 438–42, 445, 447, 449, 453, 455–58
emperor and his court, 427–38, 456
equestrian branch of imperial service, 425, 430–31, 437, 446
eunuchs, 429

Index

Germano-Roman kingdoms, 458–59
government without bureaucracy, 438
governors of provinces, 436–37
late antiquity, 450–60, 451*m*
Latin language, 439
laws and legal institutions, 432, 452
local elites, 439, 440, 445, 456
localization of power, 438–49
military organization, 413, 414, 415, 417–27, 419*t*, 428, 445*t*, 454–55, 455*t*
population growth in empire, 444, 445*t*, 455
praetorian guard, 424–25
principate, 415, 420, 421, 422, 442
procuratorships, 431, 446
provincials becoming emperors, 415
recruits' gold, 457
religion and emperor as form of god, 434, 452–53
Romanization of provinces, 438–40
senate, 430, 431–32, 436
slavery, 429
statues of reigning emperors, 440
taxes, 441–42, 444–46, 445*t*, 449, 452, 457
third-century crisis, 448–49
tribute, 441, 443, 452, 457
universal empire, 427–28, 453
wealth, 439, 457 (p. 552)
Roman republic, 383–411
 aedileship, 393, 394
 assemblies, 387–88
 citizenship, 403, 404
 civil authority, 392–93
 civil service, 387
 clientela relations, 398
 collapse of, 408–10
 colonization, 405
 comitia curiata, 387–88
 conflict between patricians and plebeians, 393–94
 “constitution,” 384–86, 397, 408
 consulship, 386, 388, 392, 394, 395, 397
 curiae, 387
 cursus honorum, 397
 diplomacy, 404
 early Roman state, 390
 elite and masses, 395–401, 406–10
 expansion in Italy, 383, 385*m*, 402–6
 expansion outside of Italy, 383, 385*m*, 406–8
 formation of, 384–94
 formula togatorum, 404
 general elections, 397

Index

land confiscations from defeated opponents, 405
laws and legal institutions, 391–92, 398, 400
luxury laws, 400
magistrates, 386–87
military, 391–93, 400–401, 402, 404, 409
nobilitas, 395–98, 400
pater familias, authority of, 391
plebiscita, 393
political structure, 386, 398–99
populus, role of, 386, 387, 388, 399
provinces, 407
public service and quest for military distinction, 400
religion, 389–90
res publica, 390, 400
senate, 388–89
slavery, 402
social and political stability in middle republic, 394–401
“struggle of the orders,” 393–94, 395
taxes, 390, 407
trade, 407
tribute, 390, 404, 407
warfare, 389, 402
wealth, 407
Romulus Augustulus (last Roman emperor), 499
“Rosetta Stone,” 334
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 13
Runciman, W. G., 32, 279, 286, 287, 288, 289
Ruralization (Byzantine), 484
S
Sack of Rome, 513
Saïtes (Egypt), 61, 68, 79–82, 183
Samaria, 181, 184, 185
Samians, 297
Samos, 284, 291
Šamši-Adad, state of, 125, 127, 133, 152
Saracens. *See* Islamic empire
Sargon of Akkade, 115, 129–30, 140, 148
Sasanian empire, 205–8, 206*m*, 218–26
collapse of, 226, 227, 460
deportations, 222, 225
economy, 222
elites, 221
infrastructure, 222
Jews in, 225
kingship and nobility, 218, 220–22, 226
military and warfare, 223
religion, 224, 225
Roman warfare against, 448, 480

Index

trade, 222
tribute, 207
Satraps. *See* Hellenistic empires; Iranian empires
Saul (biblical), 181
Scheidel, Walter, 33
Schliemann, Heinrich, 235
Second Punic War, 373, 380, 418
Sectarianism, 186
Sejanus (Roman praetorian prefect), 424
Seleucids, 203, 325, 326, 329, 332–34, 341
Seleucus I, 203, 324
Seleucus II, 203
Seleucus IV, 334
Seljuks, 491
Semiperipherality, 33
Senate, Roman, 388–89, 430, 431–32, 436
Sennacherib, 140, 148
Septimius Severus, 205, 423, 424, 446–47
Sertorius (Spain), 418
Service, Elman, 9, 12
Sesostris III (Egypt), 76
Severus Alexander, 447
Shabako (Egypt), 81
Shabahr I (Sasanian), 205, 219–20, 223, 224
Shabahr II (Sasanian), 205
Shaft Grave period (Greece), 242
Shamhat (Epic of Gilgamesh), 105
Shubat-Enlil (Mesopotamia), 103
Sibylline Books or Oracles, 389, 434
Sicily, 282*m*, 283–85, 293, 365, 372, 407
Simon ben Kosiba, 191
Simon the Hasmonean, 195
Skalník, Peter, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 19
Skocpol, Theda, 38, 39
Slavery
 Assyrian empire, 143, 152
 Byzantine empire, 479
Hittites, 174
Islamic empire, 527
Near Eastern city-states, 109, 112–13
Roman empire, 402, 429
Slavs, 481
Smith, Michael, 15 (p. 553)
Smith, S. T., 77
Smyrna, 263
Social contract, 11
Social War (Rome), 406, 410, 418
Solomon (biblical), 181

Index

The Sources of social power (Mann), 63

Spain

Arab and Berber invasion of, 524

Carthaginian presence in, 373

peasants, 514

Visigoths in, 506, 510, 511

warfare in fifth century, 513

Sparta

Athens vs., 290

attack on Naupaktos, 308

coercion-intensive, 283, 292

economic services, 293

as head of alliance, 279

military, 283

naval warfare, 290

as polis, 260, 264, 271, 273, 274

politically caught between Athens and Persia, 283-84

religion and belief systems, 294

social customs, 288

subject cities, 289

Spartacus, 418

Spruyt, Hendrik, 37

State

categories of, 14-15

city-states, 30-32

collapse of, 38-41

defined, 5-9

dynamics of, 33-41

empires, 27-30

origins of, 9-14

properties of, 16-26

quality of historical record as factor, 4

scope of issues, 4

size of, 3, 29-30

time demarcations, 3

Statemaking, 20, 37

Steinmetz, George, 280

Stone, Elizabeth, 99

Stress theory, 12

Sufyanids, 528, 530

Sulla (Roman), 418

Sumerian city-states. *See* Near Eastern city-states

Sumerian King List, 104, 116

Superordination, 10

Suppiluliuma I (Hittite), 164, 167, 168, 169, 176

Surnames, Greek, 264

Surplus appropriation, 24, 478-80, 482, 492. *See also* Taxation and tribute extraction; Tribute

Susa (Achaemenid), 201

Index

Sympoliteia (Greek), 304, 309

Syracuse

coercion- and capital-intensive, 283, 292

cultural achievements, 296

deportations, 285

as expansionist state, 279

military and naval power, 284, 291

monarchs and power, 288

as multicity state, 285

religion and belief systems, 294

resident aliens, 288

size of, 261

slavery, 288, 292

subject cities, 289

taxes, 291

wealth, 285

Systemic theory, 29

T

Taagepera, Rein, 29

Tabal/Tubal, 126, 176

Tacitus, 194, 413, 421, 424, 427, 502

Taghlib of Mesopotamia, 521

Tainter, Joseph, 39

Tambiah, Stanley, 27

Tanukh of Syria, 521

Taras (Greece), 261

Tarhuntassa (Hittite), 167

Taxation and tribute extraction, 19, 23–25. *See also* Protection as state role; Surplus appropriation; Tribute

Byzantine empire, 482, 484

Carthage, 376

Egypt, 85

Greek *koinon*, 316–17

Hellenistic empires, 339, 343, 345, 349

Islamic empire, 531–32

Mesopotamian empires, 127

Roman monarchy, 441–42, 444–46, 445*t*, 449, 452, 457

Roman republic, 390, 407

Telipinu (Hittite), 165

Temenid dynasty, 328, 329, 332

Temples. *See also* Religion

Egypt, 87–88

Hittites, 173–74

Territorial states. *See also* Roman monarchy

Carthage, 371–73

origin of, 15

Textile industry, 248

Thebes, 75, 77–79, 85, 244, 253, 270, 274, 279, 308, 310, 311, 313, 315

Index

Themes (Byzantine), 484
Theodoric (Ostrogoth), 499, 502–4, 505
Theodosian Code, 452, 506, 507
Theodosius the Great, 453, 456
Theokritos (Greek poet), 344
Theophilos (Byzantine emperor), 490
Theron (Akragas ruler), 285
Thespians, 311
Thessalians, 264, 307–9, 316, 318
Thomas, Carol, 286
Thomas, Robert, 21 (p. 554)
Thompson, William, 37
Thracians, 316, 327, 328, 337
Thucydides, 280, 287, 294, 296, 308
Thutmose III (Egypt), 78
Tiberius, 414, 421, 424
Tiberius Julius Alexander, 442
Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, 408
Tiglath-Pileser III, 140, 148, 149
Tilly, Charles, 5, 6, 20, 21, 22, 36, 37, 38, 281, 282
Timaeus, 384
Tin, 168–69
Tiryns (Mycenaean), 235, 243, 245, 250, 252–53
Torah, 188, 189–91, 193
Trade, 11, 20, 34
Byzantine empire, 492–93
Egypt, 72, 73, 80, 81, 82
Germanic states, 513
Hittites, 168, 175
Islamic empire, 527
Mesopotamian empires, 127–29, 131
Near Eastern city-states, 98
Roman republic, 407
Sasanian empire, 222
Trajan, 204, 428
Treaties. *See* Diplomacy; *specific treaty by name*
Trial by battle, 507
Tribes and tribal states. *See also* Barbarians
defined, 9
Greek, 306
Islamic conquests, 523–28
Mesopotamia, 122, 123, 133–37, 143, 149
Roman, 458
Tribute, 20, 23
Achaemenid empire, 210
Roman monarchy, 441, 443, 452, 457
Roman republic, 390, 404, 407
Sasanian empire, 207

Index

Trigger, Bruce, 13, 15, 18, 31, 63, 85
Tudhaliya I (Hittite), 169
Tudhaliya IV (Hittite), 166, 168
Tukulti-Ninurta I (Assyria), 146
Turchin, Peter, 33, 38, 39, 61
Tusculum, incorporation into Rome, 403
Tyre, 361
U
Udjahorresne (Egyptian naval officer), 296
Ulpian, 441
`Umar (second caliph), 529
Umayyad empire, 29, 520*m. See also* Islamic empire
Umma (Mesopotamia), 103, 115, 133
Understanding early civilizations: A comparative study (Trigger), 63
Universal empire, 24, 30, 38, 41, 138, 139, 146, 153, 214, 427–28, 453, 519–23
Upper Paleolithic period, 71
Ur III, 125, 131, 133, 135, 151
Urartu, empire of, 126
Urbanization
 Byzantine empire, 485–86
 Carthage, 375–76
 Egypt, 86–87
 Greek city-states, 264–68
 ideology of urban life, 105–7
Uru'inimgina (ruler of Lagash), 109, 116
Uruk, city of, 102, 103, 116
Uruk period, 99*t*, 100, 101, 112
Uruk vase, 102, 108
`Uthman (caliph), 528, 529
Utica, 368
V
Valerian (Roman emperor), 205
Van Creveld, Martin, 8
Vandals, 459, 480, 498–502, 510
Van De Mieroop, Marc, 110
Venetian doges, 397
Venetian power, 492, 494
Ventrìs, Michael, 236
Vespasian, 421, 424, 427, 431–32, 443, 446
Viceroy's role (Egypt), 77
Violence, 17, 20
Visigoths, 459, 480, 498–503, 506, 513
Vizier's role (Egypt), 74, 88
Vologeses I (Arsacid), 215
Vologeses VI (Arsacid), 205
W
Wace, A. J. B., 236
Wahram Chobin (Sasanian), 207

Index

Wallerstein, Immanuel, 34–35
Wallis, John, 17
Warfare, 20, 25, 35, 37. *See also* Civil war; Military
Egypt, 73, 78, 84
Germanic successor states, 513
Greek city-states, 273–74
Hellenistic empires, 338, 343
Hittites, 167–70
Near Eastern city-states, 115
Roman monarchy, 417–27, 446–48, 453–55
Roman republic, 389, 402
Sasanian empire, 223
Wastage, 441
Wealth
Carthage, 379
Church accumulating, 512
Greek multicity states, 293, 298
Hellenistic empires, 340, 344
Roman monarchy, 439, 457
Roman republic, 407
Syracuse, 285
Weber, Max, 5, 8, 14, 24, 32, 63, 456
Weingast, Barry, 17
Wilkinson, David, 34
Wittfogel, Karl, 11, 63–64, 65
Wright, Henry, 7 (p. 555)
Writing. *See also* Clay tablets
Arabic papyri in Egypt, 533–34
Crete, 236, 237
Egyptian hieroglyphics, 81
Hittites, 172–73
Mesopotamian empires, 121
Near Eastern city-states, 96–97, 101, 102
Phrygians, 178
Roman monarchy, 440
X
Xenias (Spartan), 296
Xenophon, 287, 296
Xerxes (Persia), 82, 201–2
Y
Yahweh (Jewish God), 183, 189–90
Yazdgerd III (Sasanian king), 208
Yehud (Jewish states), 183–84
Yoffee, N., 236–37
Z
Zechariah (biblical), 183
Zenobia, Queen, 447
Zeus at Olympia, 307

Index

Zeus Homa(gy)rios, 319

Zimrilim state (eastern Syria), 125, 133, 152

Zoroastrians, 207, 212, 214, 217, 221, 223–25, 519, 535